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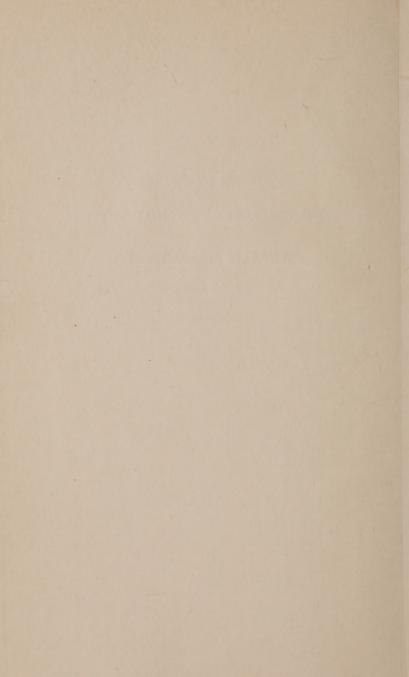
THE COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS OF

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME III









THE COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS OF

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

III
THE PRELUDE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

A MOUNTAIN ROAD, WESTMORELAND Frontispiece
"And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
And when the flock with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose." (Page 191)
In the springtime, when the lambs are able to
walk, the shepherd drives the flock to the fields,
and there they stay until the winter.
Wordsworth's Birthplace at Cockermouth Page 16
"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birthplace."
T1 W
Esthwaite Water
"Oft in the public roads
Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
Was yellowing the hill-tops, I went abroad
With a dear friend, and for the better part
Of two delightful hours we strolled along
By the still borders of the misty lake
Repeating favourite verses with one voice."
The poet spent many happy hours of his boy-
hood here. The hill in the background is Weather-
lamb, referred to in "The Prelude" on page 19.
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NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE	SHEPH	ERD	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	180
	"That	notice	eable	kind	liness	of he	art				
	Spran	g out	of fo	untai	ins, th	ere a	bound	ling n	ost,		
	Wher	e sove	reign	Nat	ure di	ctate	d the	tasks			
	And o	occupa	tions	with	her	beaut;	y ado	rned,			
	And S	Shephe	erds v	vere t	he me	n tha	t plea	sed me	e first.	19	
Doro	отну V	Vords	swoi	RTH							316
((From an	oil pain	ting by	y Crow	bent in	1833).					

"Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!"

The lifelong companion of the poet, of whom Coleridge wrote: "W. and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind and heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; and if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly that who saw her would say:—

'Guilt was a thing impossible to her.'

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer."

OR

GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM



THE PRELUDE; OR, GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM

1799-1805 1850

ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the "Excursion," first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:—

"Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

"As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

"That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the 'Recluse'; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

"The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the

history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Such was the Author's language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory to the "Recluse," and that the "Recluse," if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone: viz. the "Excursion," was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The First Book of the First Part of the "Recluse" still remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author's other Publications, written subsequently to the "Excursion."

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the Sibylline Leaves, p. 197, ed. 1817, or Poetical Works, by S. T. Coleridge, vol. i, p. 206.

RYDAL MOUNT, July 13th, 1850.

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION - CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze, A visitant that while it fans my cheek Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings From the green fields, and from you azure sky. Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come To none more grateful than to me; escaped From the vast city, where I long had pined A discontented sojourner: now free. Free as a bird to settle where I will. What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream Shall with its murmur lull me into rest? The earth is all before me. With a heart Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty, I look about; and should the chosen guide Be nothing better than a wandering cloud, I cannot miss my way. I breathe again! Trances of thought and mountings of the mind Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, That burthen of my own unnatural self, The heavy weight of many a weary day Not mine, and such as were not made for me.

Long months of peace (if such bold word accord With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join
In breaking up a long-continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours, —
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse!

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make A present joy the matter of a song,

Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded: to the open fields I told
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services.
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green shady place, where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And settling into gentler happiness.
'T was autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,

Nor rest till they had reached the very door Of the one cottage which methought I saw. No picture of mere memory ever looked So fair: and while upon the fancied scene I gazed with growing love, a higher power Than Fancy gave assurance of some work Of glory there forthwith to be begun, Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon, Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks, Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound. From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun Had almost touched the horizon; casting then A backward glance upon the curling cloud Of city smoke, by distance ruralised; Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive. But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took, Even with the chance equipment of that hour, The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale. It was a splendid evening, and my soul Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked Æolian visitations; but the harp Was soon defrauded, and the banded host Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,

And lastly utter silence! "Be it so: Why think of anything but present good?" So, like a home-bound labourer, I pursued My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed Mild influence; nor left in me one wish Again to bend the Sabbath of that time To a servile yoke. What need of many words? A pleasant loitering journey, through three days Continued, brought me to my hermitage. I spare to tell of what ensued, the life In common things — the endless store of things. Rare, or at least so seeming, every day Found all about me in one neighbourhood — The self-congratulation, and, from morn To night, in broken cheerfulness serene. But speedily an earnest longing rose To brace myself to some determined aim, Reading or thinking; either to lay up New stores, or rescue from decay the old By timely interference: and therewith Came hopes still higher, that with outward life I might endue some airy phantasies That had been floating loose about for years. And to such beings temperately deal forth The many feelings that oppressed my heart. That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light

Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear And mock me with a sky that ripens not Into a steady morning: if my mind, Remembering the bold promise of the past, Would gladly grapple with some noble theme, Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare For such an arduous work, I through myself Make rigorous inquisition, the report

Is often cheering; for I neither seem To lack that first great gift, the vital soul, Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers, Subordinate helpers of the living mind: Nor am I naked of external things, Forms, images, nor numerous other aids Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil And needful to build up a Poet's praise. Time, place, and manner do I seek, and these Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such As may be singled out with steady choice; No little band of vet remembered names Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope To summon back from lonesome banishment, And make them dwellers in the hearts of men Now living, or to live in future years. Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea, Will settle on some British theme, some old Romantic tale by Milton left unsung: More often turning to some gentle place Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand, Amid reposing knights by a river side Or fountain, listen to the grave reports

Of dire enchantments faced and overcome
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with
sword

Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife; Whence inspiration for a song that winds Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid To patient courage and unblemished truth, To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable, And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves. Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate How vanquished Mithridates northward passed, And, hidden in the cloud of years, became Odin, the Father of a race by whom Perished the Roman Empire: how the friends And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles, And left their usages, their arts and laws, To disappear by a slow gradual death, To dwindle and to perish one by one. Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years Survived, and, when the European came With skill and power that might not be withstood,

Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold And wasted down by glorious death that race Of natural heroes; or I would record How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man, Unnamed among the chronicles of kings, Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell. How that one Frenchman, through continued force Of meditation on the inhuman deeds Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles, Went single in his ministry across The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed, But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus sought Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines: How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower, All over his dear Country; left the deeds Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts, To people the steep rocks and river banks, Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul Of independence and stern liberty. Sometimes it suits me better to invent A tale from my own heart, more near akin To my own passions and habitual thoughts; Some variegated story, in the main Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts

Before the very sun that brightens it, Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish, My last and favourite aspiration, mounts With yearning toward some philosophic song Of Truth that cherishes our daily life: With meditations passionate from deep Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre; But from this awful burthen I full soon Take refuge and beguile myself with trust That mellower years will bring a riper mind And clearer insight. Thus my days are past In contradiction; with no skill to part Vague longing, haply bred by want of power, From paramount impulse not to be withstood, A timorous capacity, from prudence, From circumspection, infinite delay. Humility and modest awe, themselves Betray me, serving often for a cloak To a more subtle selfishness: that now Locks every function up in blank reserve, Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye That with intrusive restlessness beats off Simplicity and self-presented truth. Ah! better far than this, to stray about Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,

And ask no record of the hours, resigned To vacant musing, unreproved neglect Of all things, and deliberate holiday. Far better never to have heard the name Of zeal and just ambition, than to live Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again, Then feels immediately some hollow thought Hang like an interdict upon her hopes. This is my lot; for either still I find Some imperfection in the chosen theme, Or see of absolute accomplishment Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself, That I recoil and droop, and seek repose In listlessness from vain perplexity. Unprofitably travelling toward the grave, Like a false steward who hath much received And renders nothing back.

Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst
thou,

O Derwent! winding among grassy holms

Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

When he had left the mountains and received On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers That yet survive, a shattered monument Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed Along the margin of our terrace walk; A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved. Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child, In a small mill-race severed from his stream. Made one long bathing of a summer's day: Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill, The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height, Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone Beneath the sky, as if I had been born On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport A naked savage, in the thunder shower.





Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted; — there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 't was my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the
night,

Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation; — moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less, when spring had warmed the cultured Vale, Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird Had in high places built her lodge; though mean Our object and inglorious, yet the end Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed) Suspended by the blast that blew amain, Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time While on the perilous ridge I hung alone, With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky Of earth — and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange, that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;

Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found A little boat tied to a willow tree Within a rocky cove, its usual home. Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on; Leaving behind her still, on either side, Small circles glittering idly in the moon, Until they melted all into one track Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows, Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point With an unswerving line, I fixed my view Upon the summit of a craggy ridge, The horizon's utmost boundary; far above Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky. She was an elfin pinnace; lustily I dipped my oars into the silent lake,

And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat Went heaving through the water like a swan: When, from behind that craggy steep till then The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge, As if with voluntary power instinct, Upreared its head. I struck and struck again, And growing still in stature the grim shape Towered up between me and the stars, and still. For so it seemed, with purpose of its own And measured motion like a living thing, Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned. And through the silent water stole my way Back to the covert of the willow tree: There in her mooring-place I left my bark, — And through the meadows homeward went, in grave And serious mood; but after I had seen That spectacle, for many days, my brain Worked with a dim and undetermined sense Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts There hung a darkness, call it solitude Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes Remained, no pleasant images of trees, Of sea, or sky, no colours of green fields; But huge and mighty forms, that do not live Like living men, moved slowly through the mind By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe! 2 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought That givest to forms and images a breath And everlasting motion, not in vain By day or star-light thus from my first dawn Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me The passions that build up our human soul: Not with the mean and vulgar works of man, But with high objects, with enduring things — With life and Nature — purifying thus The elements of feeling and of thought, And sanctifying, by such discipline, Both pain and fear, until we recognise A grandeur in the beatings of the heart. Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me With stinted kindness. In November days. When vapours rolling down the valley made A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods, At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights, When, by the margin of the trembling lake, Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went In solitude, such intercourse was mine; Mine was it in the fields both day and night, And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun [21]

Was set, and visible for many a mile The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom, I heeded not their summons: happy time It was indeed for all of us - for me It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud The village clock tolled six, — I wheeled about, Proud and exulting like an untired horse That cares not for his home. All shod with steel, We hissed along the polished ice in games Confederate, imitative of the chase And woodland pleasures, — the resounding horn, The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare. So through the darkness and the cold we flew, And not a voice was idle: with the din Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; The leafless trees and every icy crag Tinkled like iron: while far distant hills Into the tumult sent an alien sound Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west The orange sky of evening died away. Not seldom from the uproar I retired Into a silent bay, or sportively Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng, To cut across the reflex of a star That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me — even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye, through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth,
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change

Of exercise and play, to which the year Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours: Nor saw a band in happiness and joy Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod. I could record with no reluctant voice The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line, True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong And unreproved enchantment led us on By rocks and pools shut out from every star. All the green summer, to forlorn cascades Among the windings hid of mountain brooks. - Unfading recollections! at this hour The heart is almost mine with which I felt, From some hill-top on sunny afternoons, The paper kite high among fleecy clouds Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser; Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days, Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt, A ministration of your own was yours;

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Can I forget you, being as you were So beautiful among the pleasant fields In which ye stood? or can I here forget The plain and seemly countenance with which Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye Delights and exultations of your own. Eager and never weary we pursued Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate In square divisions parcelled out and all With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head In strife too humble to be named in verse: Or round the naked table, snow-white deal, Cherry or maple, sate in close array, And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world, Neglected and ungratefully thrown by Even for the very service they had wrought, But husbanded through many a long campaign. Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few Had changed their functions: some, plebeian cards Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth, Had dignified, and called to represent The persons of departed potentates. Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!

Ironic diamonds, — clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades, A congregation piteously akin! Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit, Those sooty knaves, precipitated down With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven: The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse, Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay, And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad Incessant rain was falling, or the frost Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth; And, interrupting oft that eager game, From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice The pent-up air, struggling to free itself, Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Which seem, in their simplicity, to own An intellectual charm; that calm delight Which, if I err not, surely must belong To those first-born affinities that fit Our new existence to existing things, And, in our dawn of being, constitute The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,

Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league Of shining water, gathering as it seemed, Through every hair-breadth in that field of light, New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar jov Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss Which, like a tempest, works along the blood And is forgotten; even then I felt Gleams like the flashing of a shield; — the earth And common face of Nature spake to me Rememberable things; sometimes, 't is true, By chance collisions and quaint accidents (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain Nor profitless, if haply they impressed Collateral objects and appearances, Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep Until maturer seasons called them forth To impregnate and to elevate the mind. - And if the vulgar joy by its own weight Wearied itself out of the memory, The scenes which were a witness of that joy Remained in their substantial lineaments Depicted on the brain, and to the eye

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.

I began

My story early — not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memory — ere the breath of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows:
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught

To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind Hath been revived, and if this genial mood Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down Through later years the story of my life.

The road lies plain before me; —'t is a theme Single and of determined bounds; and hence I choose it rather at this time, than work Of ampler or more varied argument, Where I might be discomfited and lost:

And certain hopes are with me, that to thee This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

BOOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME (continued)

Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace

The simple ways in which my childhood walked;

Those chiefly that first led me to the love

Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet

Was in its birth, sustained as might befall

By nourishment that came unsought; for still

From week to week, from month to month, we lived

A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed;
No chair remained before the doors; the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last,
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish, with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem?
One is there, though the wisest and the best

Of all mankind, who covets not at times Union that cannot be; — who would not give If so he might, to duty and to truth The eagerness of infantine desire? A tranquillising spirit presses now On my corporeal frame, so wide appears The vacancy between me and those days Which yet have such self-presence in my mind, That, musing on them, often do I seem Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself And of some other Being. A rude mass Of native rock, left midway in the square Of our small market village, was the goal Or centre of these sports; and when, returned After long absence, thither I repaired, Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream. And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends! I know That more than one of you will think with me Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame From whom the stone was named, who there had sate.

And watched her table with its huckster's wares Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round With giddy motion. But the time approached That brought with it a regular desire For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms Of Nature were collaterally attached To every scheme of holiday delight And every boyish sport, less grateful else And languidly pursued.

When summer came, Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays, To sweep along the plain of Windermere With rival oars; and the selected bourne Was now an Island musical with birds That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown With lilies of the valley like a field; And now a third small Island, where survived In solitude the ruins of a shrine Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race So ended, disappointment could be none, Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy: We rested in the shade, all pleased alike, Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength, And the vain-glory of superior skill, Were tempered; thus was gradually produced

A quiet independence of the heart:
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare! More than we wished we knew the blessing then Of vigorous hunger — hence corporeal strength Unsapped by delicate viands: for, exclude A little weekly stipend, and we lived Through three divisions of the quartered year In penniless poverty. But now to school From the half-yearly holidays returned, We came with weightier purses, that sufficed To furnish treats more costly than the Dame Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied. Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground, Or in the woods, or by a river side Or shady fountains, while among the leaves Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy. Nor is my aim neglected if I tell How sometimes, in the length of those half-years, We from our funds drew largely; - proud to curb,

And eager to spur on, the galloping steed: And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud Supplied our want, we haply might employ Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound Were distant: some famed temple where of yore The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls Of that large abbey, where within the Vale Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built, Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch. Belfry, and images, and living trees; A holy scene! — Along the smooth green turf Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace, Left by the west wind sweeping overhead From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers In that sequestered valley may be seen, Both silent and both motionless alike: Such the deep shelter that is there, and such The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,
With whip and spur we through the chauntry flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
And the stone-abbot, and that single wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
Of the old church, that — though from recent showers
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint

Internal breezes, sobbings of the place And respirations, from the roofless walls The shuddering ivy dripped large drops — yet still So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird Sang to herself, that there I could have made My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there To hear such music. Through the walls we flew And down the valley, and, a circuit made In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams, And that still spirit shed from evening air! Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed Along the sides of the steep hills, or when Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore, Within the crescent of a pleasant bay, A tavern stood; no homely-featured house, Primeval like its neighbouring cottages, But 't was a splendid place, the door beset With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine. In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built On the large island, had this dwelling been

More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,

Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.

But — though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed

The threshold, and large golden characters, Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight And mockery of the rustic painter's hand — Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay Upon a slope surmounted by a plain Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood A grove, with gleams of water through the trees And over the tree-tops; nor did we want Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream. There, while through half an afternoon we played On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall, When in our pinnace we returned at leisure Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach Of some small island steered our course with one, The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there. And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute Alone upon the rock — oh, then, the calm And dead still water lay upon my mind

Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky, Never before so beautiful, sank down Into my heart, and held me like a dream! Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus Daily the common range of visible things Grew dear to me: already I began To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun, Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge And surety of our earthly life, a light Which we behold and feel we are alive: Nor for his bounty to so many worlds — But for this cause, that I had seen him lay His beauty on the morning hills, had seen The western mountain touch his setting orb, In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow For its own pleasure and I breathed with joy. And, from like feelings, humble though intense, To patriotic and domestic love Analogous, the moon to me was dear; For I could dream away my purposes, Standing to gaze upon her while she hung Midway between the hills as if she knew No other region, but belonged to thee, Yea, appertained by a peculiar right To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached My heart to rural objects, day by day Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell How Nature, intervenient till this time And secondary, now at length was sought For her own sake. But who shall parcel out His intellect by geometric rules, Split like a province into round and square? Who knows the individual hour in which His habits were first sown, even as a seed? Who that shall point as with a wand and say "This portion of the river of my mind Came from yon fountain?" Thou, my Friend! art one More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee Science appears but what in truth she is, Not as our glory and our absolute boast, Not as a succedaneum, and a prop To our infirmity. No officious slave Art thou of that false secondary power By which we multiply distinctions, then Deem that our puny boundaries are things That we perceive, and not that we have made. To thee, unblinded by these formal arts, The unity of all hath been revealed, And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled Than many are to range the faculties

In scale and order, class the cabinet
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
If each most obvious and particular thought,
Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe, (For with my best conjecture I would trace Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe, Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye! For him, in one dear Presence, there exists A virtue which irradiates and exalts Objects through widest intercourse of sense; No outcast he, bewildered and depressed: Along his infant veins are interfused The gravitation and the filial bond Of Nature that connect him with the world. Is there a flower, to which he points with hand Too weak to gather it, already love Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him Hath beautified that flower; already shades

Of pity cast from inward tenderness Do fall around him upon aught that bears Unsightly marks of violence or harm. Emphatically such a Being lives, Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail, An inmate of this active universe: For, feeling has to him imparted power That through the growing faculties of sense Doth like an agent of the one great Mind Create, creator and receiver both. Working but in alliance with the works Which it beholds. — Such, verily, is the first Poetic spirit of our human life, By uniform control of after years, In most, abated or suppressed; in some, Through every change of growth and of decay, Pre-eminent till death.

From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me; and I fear

That in its broken windings we shall need The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing: For now a trouble came into my mind From unknown causes I was left alone Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why. The props of my affections were removed. And yet the building stood, as if sustained By its own spirit! All that I beheld Was dear, and hence to finer influxes The mind lay open to a more exact And close communion. Many are our joys In youth, but oh! what happiness to live When every hour brings palpable access Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight, And sorrow is not there! The seasons came, And every season wheresoe'er I moved Unfolded transitory qualities, Which, but for this most watchful power of love. Had been neglected; left a register Of permanent relations, else unknown. Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude More active ever than "best society" -Society made sweet as solitude By silent inobtrusive sympathies, And gentle agitations of the mind From manifold distinctions, difference

Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye, No difference is, and hence, from the same source. Sublimer joy; for I would walk alone, Under the quiet stars, and at that time Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound To breathe an elevated mood, by form Or image unprofaned; and I would stand, If the night blackened with a coming storm, Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are The ghostly language of the ancient earth, Or make their dim abode in distant winds. Thence did I drink the visionary power; And deem not profitless those fleeting moods Of shadowy exultation: not for this, That they are kindred to our purer mind And intellectual life; but that the soul, Remembering how she felt, but what she felt Remembering not, retains an obscure sense Of possible sublimity, whereto With growing faculties she doth aspire, With faculties still growing, feeling still That whatsoever point they gain, they yet Have something to pursue.

And not alone, 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair And tranquil scenes, that universal power

And fitness in the latent qualities And essences of things, by which the mind Is moved with feelings of delight, to me Came strengthened with a superadded soul, A virtue not its own. My morning walks Were early; — oft before the hours of school I travelled round our little lake, five miles Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,³ Then passionately loved; with heart how full Would he peruse these lines! For many years Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds Both silent to each other, at this time We live as if those hours had never been. Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush Was audible; and sate among the woods Alone upon some jutting eminence, At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale, Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude. How shall I seek the origin? where find Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?

Oft in these moments such a holy calm Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes

Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw Appeared like something in myself, a dream, A prospect in the mind.

'T were long to tell What spring and autumn, what the winter snows, And what the summer shade, what day and night, Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought From sources inexhaustible, poured forth To feed the spirit of religious love In which I walked with Nature. But let this Be not forgotten, that I still retained My first creative sensibility; That by the regular action of the world My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power Abode with me; a forming hand, at times Rebellious, acting in a devious mood; A local spirit of his own, at war With general tendency, but, for the most, Subservient strictly to external things With which it communed. An auxiliar light Came from my mind, which on the setting sun Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds. The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed A like dominion, and the midnight storm Grew darker in the presence of my eye:

Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence, And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,

Pass unrecorded, that I still have loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic as resembling more
Creative agency. The song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was
come

And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
In the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic natures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
Coming in revelation, did converse
With things that really are; I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts

Were steeped in feeling: I was only then Contented, when with bliss ineffable I felt the sentiment of Being spread O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still; O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought And human knowledge, to the human eve Invisible, yet liveth to the heart; O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings. Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself, And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not If high the transport, great the joy I felt, Communing in this sort through earth and heaven With every form of creature, as it looked Towards the Uncreated with a countenance Of adoration, with an eye of love. One song they sang, and it was audible, Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear, O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain, Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice

To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds That dwell among the hills where I was born. If in my youth I have been pure in heart, If, mingling with the world, I am content With my own modest pleasures, and have lived With God and Nature communing, removed From little enmities and low desires — The gift is yours; if in these times of fear, This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown, If, 'mid indifference and apathy, And wicked exultation when good men On every side fall off, we know not how, To selfishness, disguised in gentle names Of peace and quiet and domestic love Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers On visionary minds; if, in this time Of dereliction and dismay, I yet Despair not of our nature, but retain A more than Roman confidence, a faith That fails not, in all sorrow my support, The blessing of my life — the gift is yours, Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 't is yours, Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed My lofty speculations; and in thee, For this uneasy heart of ours, I find

A never-failing principle of joy And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared In the great city, 'mid far other scenes; But we, by different roads, at length have gained The selfsame bourne. And for this cause to thee I speak, unapprehensive of contempt, The insinuated scoff of coward tongues, And all that silent language which so oft In conversation between man and man Blots from the human countenance all trace Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought The truth in solitude, and, since the days That gave thee liberty, full long desired, To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been The most assiduous of her ministers: In many things my brother, chiefly here In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!

Health and the quiet of a healthful mind Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men, And yet more often living with thyself, And for thyself, so haply shall thy days Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

BOOK THIRD

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the wheels
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,
Or covetous of exercise and air;
He passed — nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;
And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope; Some friends I had, acquaintances who there Seemed friends, poor simple schoolboys, now hung round

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

With honour and importance: in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed
A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs,
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,
From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed Delighted through the motley spectacle; Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets, Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:

Migration strange for a stripling of the hills, A northern villager.

As if the change
Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
Behold me rich in monies, and attired
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.
My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
With other signs of manhood that supplied
The lack of beard. — The weeks went roundly on,
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,

Smooth housekeeping within, and all without Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was: Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure; Right underneath, the College kitchens made A humming sound, less tuneable than bees, But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes Of sharp command and scolding intermixed. Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock, Who never let the quarters, night or day, Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours Twice over with a male and female voice. Her pealing organ was my neighbour too; And from my pillow, looking forth by light Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold The antechapel where the statue stood Of Newton with his prism and silent face, The marble index of a mind for ever Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal students, faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

And honest dunces — of important days, Examinations, when the man was weighed As in a balance! of excessive hopes, Tremblings withal and commendable fears, Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad — Let others that know more speak as they know. Such glory was but little sought by me, And little won. Yet from the first crude days Of settling time in this untried abode, I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts, Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears About my future worldly maintenance, And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind. A feeling that I was not for that hour, Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down? For (not to speak of Reason and her pure Reflective acts to fix the moral law Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope, Bowing her head before her sister Faith As one far mightier), hither I had come, Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers And faculties, whether to work or feel. Oft when the dazzling show no longer new Had ceased to dazzle, ofttimes did I quit My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves, And as I paced alone the level fields

Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime With which I had been conversant, the mind Drooped not; but there into herself returning, With proper rebound seemed fresh as heretofore. At least I more distinctly recognised Her native instincts: let me dare to speak A higher language, say that now I felt What independent solaces were mine, To mitigate the injurious sway of place Or circumstance, how far soever changed In youth, or to be changed in after years. As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained, I looked for universal things; perused The common countenance of earth and sky: Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace Of that first Paradise whence man was driven; And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed By the proud name she bears — the name of Heaven. I called on both to teach me what they might; Or, turning the mind in upon herself, Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts And spread them with a wider creeping; felt Incumbencies more awful, visitings Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul, That tolerates the indignities of Time, And, from the centre of Eternity

All finite motions overruling, lives In glory immutable. But peace! enough Here to record that I was mounting now To such community with highest truth — A track pursuing, not untrod before, From strict analogies by thought supplied Or consciousnesses not to be subdued. To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower, Even the loose stones that cover the highway. I gave moral life: I saw them feel, Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass Lay imbedded in a quickening soul, and all That I beheld respired with inward meaning. Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on From transitory passion, unto this I was as sensitive as waters are To the sky's influence in a kindred mood Of passion; was obedient as a lute That waits upon the touches of the wind. Unknown, unthought of, vet I was most rich -I had a world about me — 't was my own: I made it, for it only lived to me, And to the God who sees into the heart. Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed By outward gestures and by visible looks:

Some called it madness — so indeed it was, If child-like fruitfulness in passing jov. If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured To inspiration, sort with such a name: If prophecy be madness; if things viewed By poets in old time, and higher up By the first men, earth's first inhabitants, May in these tutored days no more be seen With undisordered sight. But leaving this, It was no madness, for the bodily eye Amid my strongest workings evermore Was searching out the lines of difference As they lie hid in all external forms, Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf, To the broad ocean and the azure heavens Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars, Could find no surface where its power might sleep; Which spake perpetual logic to my soul, And by an unrelenting agency Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life Up to an eminence, and told a tale Of matters which not falsely may be called The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,

Creation and divinity itself I have been speaking, for my theme has been What has passed within me. Not of outward things Done visibly for other minds, words, signs, Symbols or actions, but of my own heart Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind. O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls, And what they do within themselves while yet The yoke of earth is new to them, the world Nothing but a wild field where they were sown. This is, in truth, heroic argument, This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch With hand however weak, but in the main It lies far hidden from the reach of words. Points have we all of us within our souls Where all stand single; this I feel, and make Breathings for incommunicable powers; But is not each a memory to himself, And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme, I am not heartless, for there's not a man That lives who hath not known his god-like hours. And feels not what an empire we inherit As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

No more: for now into a populous plain We must descend. A Traveller I am,

Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt
To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend!
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

It hath been told, that when the first delight That flashed upon me from this novel show Had failed, the mind returned into herself; Yet true it is, that I had made a change In climate, and my nature's outward coat Changed also slowly and insensibly. Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts Of loneliness gave way to empty noise And superficial pastimes; now and then Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes; And, worst of all, a treasonable growth Of indecisive judgments, that impaired And shook the mind's simplicity. — And yet This was a gladsome time. Could I behold — Who, less insensible than sodden clay In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide, Could have beheld — with undelighted heart, So many happy youths, so wide and fair A congregation in its budding-time Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once

So many divers samples from the growth
Of life's sweet season — could have seen unmoved
That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
Decking the matron temples of a place
So famous through the world? To me, at least,
It was a goodly prospect: for, in sooth,
Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped,
And independent musings pleased me so
That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
Yet could I only cleave to solitude
In lonely places; if a throng was near
That way I leaned by nature; for my heart
Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate
My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,
Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
Even with myself divided such delight,
Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
In human language), easily I passed
From the remembrances of better things,
And slipped into the ordinary works
Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed.
Caverns there were within my mind which sun
Could never penetrate, yet did there not
Want store of leafy arbours where the light

Might enter in at will. Companionships,
Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
Unprofitable talk at morning hours;
Drifted about along the streets and walks,
Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
To gallop through the country in blind zeal
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act
In this new life. Imagination slept,
And yet not utterly. I could not print
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
Of generations of illustrious men,
Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
Place also by the side of this dark sense
Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
Seemed humbled in these precincts, thence to be
The more endeared. Their several memories here
(Even like their persons in their portraits clothed

With the accustomed garb of daily life) Put on a lowly and a touching grace Of more distinct humanity, that left All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade; Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard, Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State — Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace, I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend! Yea, our blind Poet, who in his later day, Stood almost single; uttering odious truth — Darkness before, and danger's voice behind, Soul awful — if the earth has ever lodged An awful soul — I seemed to see him here Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth — A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks Angelical, keen eye, courageous look, And conscious step of purity and pride. Among the band of my compeers was one Whom chance had stationed in the very room Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard!

Be it confest that, for the first time, seated Within thy innocent lodge and oratory, One of a festive circle, I poured out Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain Never excited by the fumes of wine Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran From the assembly: through a length of streets. Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door In not a desperate or opprobrious time, Albeit long after the importunate bell Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice No longer haunting the dark winter night. Call back, O Friend! a moment to thy mind. The place itself and fashion of the rites. With careless ostentation shouldering up My surplice, through the inferior throng I clove Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood On the last skirts of their permitted ground, Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts! I am ashamed of them: and that great Bard, And thou, O Friend! who in thy ample mind Hast placed me high above my best deserts, Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour. In some of its unworthy vanities, Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort

The months passed on, remissly, not given up To wilful alienation from the right, Or walks of open scandal, but in vague And loose indifference, easy likings, aims Of a low pitch — duty and zeal dismissed. Yet Nature, or a happy course of things Not doing in their stead the needful work. The memory languidly revolved, the heart Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse Of contemplation almost failed to beat. Such life might not inaptly be compared To a floating island, an amphibious spot Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal Not wanting a fair face of water weeds And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise, Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight Of those long vistas, sacred catacombs, Where mighty minds lie visibly entombed, Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred A fervent love of rigorous discipline. — Alas! such high emotion touched not me. Look was there none within these walls to shame My easy spirits, and discountenance Their light composure, far less to instil A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed

To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame Of others but my own; I should, in truth, As far as doth concern my single self, Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere: For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries, Was a spoiled child, and, rambling like the wind, As I had done in daily intercourse With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights, And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air, I was ill-tutored for captivity; To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month, Take up a station calmly on the perch Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms Had also left less space within my mind, Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found A freshness in those objects of her love, A winning power, beyond all other power. Not that I slighted books, — that were to lack All sense, — but other passions in me ruled, Passions more fervent, making me less prompt To in-door study than was wise or well, Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used In magisterial liberty to rove, Culling such flowers of learning as might tempt A random choice, could shadow forth a place (If now I yield not to a flattering dream)

Whose studious aspect should have bent me down To instantaneous service: should at once Have made me pay to science and to arts And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord, A homage frankly offered up, like that Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains In this recess, by thoughtful Fancy built, Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves, Majestic edifices, should not want A corresponding dignity within. The congregating temper that pervades Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught To minister to works of high attempt — Works which the enthusiast would perform with love. Youth should be awed, religiously possessed With a conviction of the power that waits On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized For its own sake, on glory and on praise If but by labour won, and fit to endure The passing day; should learn to put aside Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed Before antiquity and stedfast truth And strong book-mindedness; and over all A healthy sound simplicity should reign, A seemly plainness, name it what you will, Republican or pious.

If these thoughts

Are a gratuitous emblazonry That mocks the recreant age we live in, then Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect Whatever formal gait of discipline Shall raise them highest in their own esteem — Let them parade among the Schools at will. But spare the House of God. Was ever known The witless shepherd who persists to drive A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked? A weight must surely hang on days begun And ended with such mockery. Be wise, Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained At home in pious service, to your bells Give seasonable rest, for 't is a sound Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air; And your officious doings bring disgrace On the plain steeples of our English Church, Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees, Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand In daily sight of this irreverence, Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint, Loses her just authority, falls beneath Collateral suspicion, else unknown. This truth escaped me not, and I confess,

That having 'mid my native hills given loose To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile Upon the basis of the coming time, That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy To see a sanctuary for our country's youth Informed with such a spirit as might be Its own protection; a primeval grove, Where, though the shades with cheerfulness were filled, Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds In under-coverts, yet the countenance Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe; A habitation sober and demure For ruminating creatures; a domain For quiet things to wander in; a haunt In which the heron should delight to feed By the shy rivers, and the pelican Upon the cypress spire in lonely thought Might sit and sun himself. — Alas! Alas! In vain for such solemnity I looked: Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed By chattering popinjays; the inner heart Seemed trivial, and the impresses without Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight

Those venerable Doctors saw of old,

When all who dwelt within these famous walls

Led in abstemiousness a studious life: When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung Like caterpillars eating out their way In silence, or with keen devouring noise Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time, Trained up through piety and zeal to prize Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds. O seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world! Far different service in those homely days The Muses' modest nurslings underwent From their first childhood: in that glorious time When Learning, like a stranger come from far, Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused Peasant and king; when boys and youths, the growth Of ragged villages and crazy huts, Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook, Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down, From town to town and through wide scattered realms Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands; And often, starting from some covert place, Saluted the chance comer on the road. Crying, "An obolus, a penny give To a poor scholar!" - when illustrious men,

Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
Before the doors or windows of their cells
By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

But peace to vain regrets! We see but darkly
Even when we look behind us, and best things
Are not so pure by nature that they needs
Must keep to all, as fondly all believe,
Their highest promise. If the mariner,
When at reluctant distance he hath passed
Some tempting island, could but know the ills
That must have fallen upon him had he brought
His bark to land upon the wished-for shore,
Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf
Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew
Inexorably adverse: for myself
I grieve not; happy is the gowned youth,
Who only misses what I missed, who falls
No lower than I fell.

I did not love,
Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course
Of our scholastic studies; could have wished
To see the river flow with ampler range
And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved
To see displayed among an eager few,

Who in the field of contest persevered,
Passions unworthy of youth's generous heart
And mounting spirit, pitiably repaid,
When so disturbed, whatever palms are won.
From these I turned to travel with the shoal
Of more unthinking natures, easy minds
And pillowy; yet not wanting love that makes
The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
And wisdom and the pledges interchanged
With our own inner being are forgot.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up
To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood
In my own mind remote from social life,
(At least from what we commonly so name,)
Like a lone shepherd on a promontory,
Who lacking occupation looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,
That this first transit from the smooth delights
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
To something that resembles an approach
Towards human business, to a privileged world
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery,
Did better suit my visionary mind,

Far better, than to have been bolted forth, Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way Among the conflicts of substantial life; By a more just gradation did lead on To higher things; more naturally matured. For permanent possession, better fruits, Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue. In serious mood, but oftener, I confess, With playful zest of fancy, did we note (How could we less?) the manners and the ways Of those who lived distinguished by the badge Of good or ill report; or those with whom By frame of Academic discipline We were perforce connected, men whose sway And known authority of office served To set our minds on edge, and did no more. Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind. Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring Of the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque In character, tricked out like aged trees Which through the lapse of their infirmity Give ready place to any random seed That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here on my view, confronting vividly

Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left

Appeared a different aspect of old age;
How different! yet both distinctly marked,
Objects embossed to catch the general eye,
Or portraitures for special use designed,
As some might seem, so aptly do they serve
To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments—
That book upheld as with maternal care
When she would enter on her tender scheme
Of teaching comprehension with delight,
And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life
And manners finely wrought, the delicate race
Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
Through that state arras woven with silk and gold;
This wily interchange of snaky hues,
Willingly or unwillingly revealed,
I neither knew nor cared for; and as such
Were wanting here, I took what might be found
Of less elaborate fabric. At this day
I smile, in many a mountain solitude
Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks
Of character, in points of wit as broad,
As aught by wooden images performed
For entertainment of the gaping crowd
At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit

Remembrances before me of old men — Old humourists, who have been long in their graves, And having almost in my mind put off Their human names, have into phantoms passed Of texture midway between life and books.

I play the loiterer: 't is enough to note That here in dwarf proportions were expressed The limbs of the great world; its eager strifes Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight, A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt Though short of mortal combat; and whate'er Might in this pageant be supposed to hit An artless rustic's notice, this way less, More that way, was not wasted upon me -And yet the spectacle may well demand A more substantial name, no mimic show, Itself a living part of a live whole, A creek in the vast sea; for, all degrees And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms Retainers won away from solid good; And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope, That never set the pains against the prize; Idleness halting with his weary clog, And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,

And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;
Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile,
Murmuring submission, and bald government,
(The idol weak as the idolater,)
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
And blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that might have led him; Emptiness
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth
Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
I cannot say what portion is in truth
The naked recollection of that time,
And what may rather have been called to life
By after-meditation. But delight
That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,
Is still with Innocence its own reward,
This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed
As through a wide museum from whose stores
A casual rarity is singled out
And has its brief perusal, then gives way
To others, all supplanted in their turn;
Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things
That are by nature most unneighbourly,
The head turns round and cannot right itself;

And though an aching and a barren sense
Of gay confusion still be uppermost,
With few wise longings and but little love,
Yet to the memory something cleaves at last,
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend!
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring,
Eight months! rolled pleasingly away; the ninth
Came and returned me to my native hills.

BOOK FOURTH

SUMMER VACATION

Bright was the summer's noon when quickening steps Followed each other till a dreary moor Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge, I overlooked the bed of Windermere. Like a vast river, stretching in the sun. With exultation, at my feet I saw Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays, A universe of Nature's fairest forms Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst, Magnificent, and beautiful, and gav. I bounded down the hill shouting amain For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks Replied, and when the Charon of the flood Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier, I did not step into the well-known boat Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed Up the familiar hill I took my way Towards that sweet Valley 4 where I had been reared; 'T was but a short hour's walk, ere veering round I saw the snow-white church upon her hill Sit like a throned Lady, sending out A gracious look all over her domain.

SUMMER VACATION

You azure smoke betravs the lurking town: With eager footsteps I advance and reach The cottage threshold where my journey closed. Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps, From my old Dame, so kind and motherly, While she perused me with a parent's pride. The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart Can beat never will I forget thy name. Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest After thy innocent and busy stir In narrow cares, thy little daily growth Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years, And more than eighty, of untroubled life: Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood Honoured with little less than filial love. What joy was mine to see thee once again, Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things About its narrow precincts all beloved. And many of them seeming yet my own! Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts Have felt, and every man alive can guess? The rooms, the court, the garden were not left Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat Round the stone table under the dark pine, Friendly to studious or to festive hours;

Nor that unruly child of mountain birth. The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed Within our garden, found himself at once, As if by trick insidious and unkind, Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down (Without an effort and without a will) A channel paved by man's officious care. I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again. And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts, "Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there?" Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, "An emblem here behold of thy own life: In its late course of even days with all Their smooth enthralment"; but the heart was full. Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame Walked proudly at my side: she guided me: I willing, nay — nay, wishing to be led. — The face of every neighbour whom I met Was like a volume to me; some were hailed Upon the road, some busy at their work, Unceremonious greetings interchanged With half the length of a long field between. Among my schoolfellows I scattered round Like recognitions, but with some constraint Attended, doubtless, with a little pride, But with more shame, for my habiliments,

SUMMER VACATION

The transformation wrought by gay attire. Not less delighted did I take my place At our domestic table: and, dear Friend! In this endeavour simply to relate A Poet's history, may I leave untold The thankfulness with which I laid me down In my accustomed bed, more welcome now Perhaps than if it had been more desired Or been more often thought of with regret: That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft Had lain awake on summer nights to watch The moon in splendour couched among the leaves Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood; Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro In the dark summit of the waving tree She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well
To see again, was one by ancient right
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills;
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
Among the impervious crags, but having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed
Into a gentler service. And when first

The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day Along my veins I kindled with the stir, The fermentation, and the vernal heat Of poesy, affecting private shades Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used To watch me, an attendant and a friend, Obsequious to my steps early and late, Though often of such dilatory walk Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made. A hundred times when, roving high and low, I have been harassed with the toil of verse. Much pains and little progress, and at once Some lovely Image in the song rose up Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea: Then have I darted forwards to let loose My hand upon his back with stormy joy, Caressing him again and yet again. And when at evening on the public wav I sauntered, like a river murmuring And talking to itself when all things else Are still, the creature trotted on before: Such was his custom; but whene'er he met A passenger approaching, he would turn To give me timely notice, and straightway, Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air

SUMMER VACATION

And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced To give and take a greeting that might save My name from piteous rumours, such as wait On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved — Regretted! — that word, too, was on my tongue, But they were richly laden with all good. And cannot be remembered but with thanks And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart — Those walks in all their freshness now came back Like a returning Spring. When first I made Once more the circuit of our little lake, If ever happiness hath lodged with man, That day consummate happiness was mine, Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative. The sun was set, or setting, when I left Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on A sober hour, not winning or serene, For cold and raw the air was, and untuned: But as a face we love is sweetest then When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart Have fulness in herself; even so with me It fared that evening. Gently did my soul Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood

Naked, as in the presence of her God. While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch A heart that had not been disconsolate. Strength came where weakness was not known to be, At least not felt: and restoration came Like an intruder knocking at the door Of unacknowledged weariness. I took The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself. — Of that external scene which round me lay, Little, in this abstraction, did I see; Remembered less; but I had inward hopes And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed, Conversed with promises, had glimmering views How life pervades the undecaying mind; How the immortal soul with God-like power Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep That time can lay upon her; how on earth, Man, if he do but live within the light Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad His being armed with strength that cannot fail. Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love, Of innocence, and holiday repose; And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end At last, or glorious, by endurance won. Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down

SUMMER VACATION

Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,
And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,
Around me from among the hazel leaves,
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
The off and on companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head to look if he were there;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

A freshness also found I at this time
In human Life, the daily life of those
Whose occupations really I loved;
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise,
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit
The things which were the same and yet appeared
Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,
'T was not indifferent to a youthful mind
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook
Where an old man had used to sit alone,

Now vacant; pale-faced babes whom I had left In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down; And growing girls whose beauty, filched away With all its pleasant promises, was gone To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense, And often looking round was moved to smiles Such as a delicate work of humour breeds: I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts, Of those plain-living people now observed With clearer knowledge; with another eye I saw the quiet woodman in the woods, The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight, This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame; Saw her go forth to church or other work Of state equipped in monumental trim: Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like), A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers Wore in old times. Her smooth domestic life, Affectionate without disquietude, Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less Her clear though shallow stream of piety That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course: With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read

SUMMER VACATION

Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons, And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep And made of it a pillow for her head.

Nor less do I remember to have felt. Distinctly manifested at this time. A human-heartedness about my love For objects hitherto the absolute wealth Of my own private being and no more: Which I have loved, even as a blessed spirit Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth, Might love in individual happiness. But now there opened on me other thoughts Of change, congratulation or regret, A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide; The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks, The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts-White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags, Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven, Acquaintances of every little child, And Jupiter, my own belovèd star! Whatever shadings of mortality, Whatever imports from the world of death Had come among these objects heretofore, Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong, Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings

Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way In later youth to yearnings of a love Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

As one who hangs down-bending from the side Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast Of a still water, solacing himself With such discoveries as his eye can make Beneath him in the bottom of the deep, Sees many beauteous sights — weeds, fishes, flowers, Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more, Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky, Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth Of the clear flood, from things which there abide In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam Of his own image, by a sunbeam now, And wavering motions sent he knows not whence, Impediments that make his task more sweet; Such pleasant office have we long pursued Incumbent o'er the surface of past time With like success, nor often have appeared Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend! Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,

SUMMER VACATION

There was an inner falling off — I loved, Loved deeply all that had been loved before, More deeply even than ever: but a swarm Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds, And feast and dance, and public revelry, And sports and games (too grateful in themselves. Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe, Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh Of manliness and freedom) all conspired To lure my mind from firm habitual quest Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal And damp those yearnings which had once been mine— A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up To his own eager thoughts. It would demand Some skill, and longer time than may be spared To paint these vanities, and how they wrought In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown. It seemed the very garments that I wore Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase
Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
For books and nature at that early age.
'T is true, some casual knowledge might be gained
Of character or life; but at that time,
Of manners put to school I took small note,

And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere. Far better had it been to exalt the mind By solitary study, to uphold Intense desire through meditative peace; And yet, for chastisement of these regrets, The memory of one particular hour Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid, A medley of all tempers, I had passed The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth, With din of instruments and shuffling feet, And glancing forms, and tapers glittering, And unaimed prattle flying up and down; Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed, Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head. And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired, The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse And open field, through which the pathway wound, And homeward led my steps. Magnificent The morning rose, in memorable pomp, Glorious as e'er I had beheld — in front, The sea lay laughing at a distance; near, The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds, Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;

SUMMER VACATION

And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn —
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

Strange rendezvous! My mind was at that time A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,
Solid and light, short-sighted and profound;
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,
Consorting in one mansion unreproved.
The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,
Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides,
That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
Transient and idle, lacked not intervals
When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time
Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself
Conformity as just as that of old
To the end and written spirit of God's works,
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,
Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop. Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired. How gracious, how benign, is Solitude: How potent a mere image of her sway; Most potent when impressed upon the mind With an appropriate human centre — hermit, Deep in the bosom of the wilderness; Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot Is treading, where no other face is seen) Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves; Or as the soul of that great Power is met Sometimes embodied on a public road, When, for the night deserted, it assumes A character of quiet more profound Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced
That — after I had left a flower-decked room
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought
Were making night do penance for a day
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness —

SUMMER VACATION

My homeward course led up a long ascent, Where the road's watery surface, to the top Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon And bore the semblance of another stream Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook That murmured in the vale. All else was still: No living thing appeared in earth or air. And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice, Sound there was none — but, lo! an uncouth shape, Shown by a sudden turning of the road, So near that, slipping back into the shade Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, Myself unseen. He was of stature tall. A span above man's common measure, tall, Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man Was never seen before by night or day. Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind, A mile-stone propped him: I could also ken That he was clothed in military garb, Though faded, yet entire. Companionless, No dog attending, by no staff sustained, He stood, and in his very dress appeared A desolation, a simplicity, To which the trappings of a gaudy world Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,

Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form Kept the same awful steadiness — at his feet His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length Subduing my heart's specious cowardice. I left the shady nook where I had stood And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm In measured gesture lifted to his head Returned my salutation; then resumed His station as before; and when I asked His history, the veteran, in reply. Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved, And with a quiet uncomplaining voice, A stately air of mild indifference, He told in few plain words a soldier's tale — That in the Tropic Islands he had served, Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past: That on his landing he had been dismissed, And now was travelling towards his native home. This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me." He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up An oaken staff by me yet unobserved — A staff which must have dropped from his slack hand And lay till now neglected in the grass.

SUMMER VACATION

Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared To travel without pain, and I beheld, With an astonishment but ill suppressed. His ghostly figure moving at my side: Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear To turn from present hardships to the past, And speak of war, battle, and pestilence, Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared, In what he might himself have seen or felt. He all the while was in demeanour calm. Concise in answer; solemn and sublime He might have seemed, but that in all he said There was a strange half-absence, as of one Knowing too well the importance of his theme, But feeling it no longer. Our discourse Soon ended, and together on we passed In silence through a wood gloomy and still. Up-turning, then, along an open field, We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked, And earnestly to charitable care Commended him as a poor friendless man, Belated and by sickness overcome. Assured that now the traveller would repose In comfort, I entreated that henceforth He would not linger in the public ways. But ask for timely furtherance and help

Such as his state required. At this reproof, With the same ghastly mildness in his look, He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven, And in the eye of him who passes me!"

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,
And now the soldier touched his hat once more
With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,
Whose tone bespake reviving interests
Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
The farewell blessing of the patient man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space,
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

BOOK FIFTH

BOOKS

WHEN Contemplation, like the night-calm felt Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep Into the soul its tranquillising power, Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man. Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be, Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved Through length of time, by patient exercise Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto. In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven As her prime teacher, intercourse with man Established by the sovereign Intellect, Who through that bodily image hath diffused, As might appear to the eye of fleeting time, A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hast wrought, For commerce of thy nature with herself, Things that aspire to unconquerable life; And yet we feel — we cannot choose but feel — That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart It gives, to think that our immortal being

No more shall need such garments; and yet man. As long as he shall be the child of earth, Might almost "weep to have" what he may lose, Nor be himself extinguished, but survive, Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate. A thought is with me sometimes, and I say, — Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch Her pleasant habitations, and dry up Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare, Yet would the living Presence still subsist Victorious, and composure would ensue, And kindlings like the morning — presage sure Of day returning and of life revived. But all the meditations of mankind. Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth By reason built, or passion, which itself Is highest reason in a soul sublime; The consecrated works of Bard and Sage. Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men, Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes; Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind Some element to stamp her image on In nature somewhat nearer to her own? Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

One day, when from my lips a like complaint Had fallen in presence of a studious friend, He with a smile made answer, that in truth 'T was going far to seek disquietude; But on the front of his reproof confessed That he himself had oftentimes given way To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told. That once in the stillness of a summer's noon. While I was seated in a rocky cave By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced, The famous history of the errant knight Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts Beset me, and to height unusual rose, While listlessly I sate, and, having closed The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea. On poetry and geometric truth, And their high privilege of lasting life, From all internal injury exempt, I mused; upon these chiefly: and at length, My senses yielding to the sultry air, Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream. I saw before me stretched a boundless plain Of sandy wilderness, all black and void, And as I looked around, distress and fear Came creeping over me, when at my side, Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared

Upon a dromedary, mounted high. He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes: A lance he bore, and underneath one arm A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide Was present, one who with unerring skill Would through the desert lead me; and while yet I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight Which the new-comer carried through the waste Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone (To give it in the language of the dream) Was "Euclid's Elements," and "This," said he, "Is something of more worth"; and at the word Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape. In colour so resplendent, with command That I should hold it to my ear. I did so, And heard that instant in an unknown tongue, Which vet I understood, articulate sounds. A loud prophetic blast of harmony; An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold Destruction to the children of the earth By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased The song, than the Arab with calm look declared That all would come to pass of which the voice Had given forewarning, and that he himself

Was going then to bury those two books: The one that held acquaintance with the stars, And wedded soul to soul in purest bond Of reason, undisturbed by space or time; The other that was a god, yea many gods, Had voices more than all the winds, with power To exhibit and to soothe, Through every clime, the heart of human kind. While this was uttering, strange as it may seem, I wondered not, although I plainly saw The one to be a stone, the other a shell; Nor doubted once but that they both were books. Having a perfect faith in all that passed. Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed To share his enterprise, he hurried on Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen, For oftentimes he cast a backward look. Grasping his twofold treasure. — Lance in rest, He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now He, to my fancy, had become the knight Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the knight, But was an Arab of the desert too; Of these was neither, and was both at once. His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed; And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes

Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause:
"It is," said he, "the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us"; quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,
He left me: I called after him aloud;
He heeded not; but, with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book,
In which I had been reading, at my side.

Full often, taking from the world of sleep
This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,
This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
A substance, fancied him a living man,
A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed
By love and feeling, and internal thought
Protracted among endless solitudes;
Have shaped him wandering upon this quest!
Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
Reverence was due to a being thus employed;
And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.

Enow there are on earth to take in charge
Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear;
Enow to stir for these; yea, will I say,
Contemplating in soberness the approach
Of an event so dire, by signs in earth
Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
That maniac's fond anxiety, and go
Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
When I have held a volume in my hand,
Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine!

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
Of living nature, which could thus so long
Detain me from the best of other guides
And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,
Even in the time of lisping infancy;
And later down, in prattling childhood even,
While I was travelling back among those days,
How could I ever play an ingrate's part?
Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
By intermingling strains of thankfulness
With their own thoughtless melodies; at least
It might have well beseemed me to repeat

Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.
O Friend! O Poet! brother of my soul,
Think not that I could pass along untouched
By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak?
Why call upon a few weak words to say
What is already written in the hearts
Of all that breathe? — what in the path of all
Drops daily from the tongue of every child,
Wherever man is found? The trickling tear
Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
Proclaims it, and the insuperable look
That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave
There registered: whatever else of power
Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be
Peculiar to myself, let that remain
Where still it works, though hidden from all search
Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
That here, in memory of all books which lay
Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
Whether by native prose, or numerous verse,
That in the name of all inspired souls —
From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice

That roars along the bed of Jewish song, And that more varied and elaborate. Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake Our shores in England, — from those loftiest notes Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made For cottagers and spinners at the wheel, And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs, Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes, Food for the hungry ears of little ones, And of old men who have survived their joys — 'T is just that in behalf of these, the works, And of the men that framed them, whether known Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves, That I should here assert their rights, attest Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce Their benediction; speak of them as Powers For ever to be hallowed; only less, For what we are and what we may become, Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God, Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
To transitory themes; yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid

Upon the children of the land, a pest That might have dried me up, body and soul. This verse is dedicate to Nature's self, And things that teach as Nature teaches: then, Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where, Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend! If in the season of unperilous choice, In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales Rich with indigenous produce, open ground Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will, We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed. Each in his several melancholy walk Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed, Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude: Or rather like a stalled ox debarred From touch of growing grass, that may not taste A flower till it have yielded up its sweets A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen hid amid her brood,
Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
And she herself from the maternal bond
Still undischarged; yet doth she little more
Than move with them in tenderness and love,
A centre to the circle which they make;

And now and then, alike from need of theirs And call of her own natural appetites, She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food, Which they partake at pleasure. Early died My honoured Mother, she who was the heart And hinge of all our learnings and our loves: She left us destitute, and, as we might, Trooping together. Little suits it me To break upon the sabbath of her rest With any thought that looks at others' blame: Nor would I praise her but in perfect love. Hence am I checked: but let me boldly sav. In gratitude, and for the sake of truth, Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught, Fetching her goodness rather from times past, Than shaping novelties for times to come, Had no presumption, no such jealousy, Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust Our nature, but had virtual faith that He Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk, Doth also for our nobler part provide, Under His great correction and control. As innocent instincts, and as innocent food: Or draws, for minds that are left free to trust In the simplicities of opening life, Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.

This was her creed, and therefore she was pure From anxious fear of error or mishap,
And evil, overweeningly so called;
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
Nor with impatience from the season asked
More than its timely produce; rather loved
The hours for what they are, than from regard
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
Such was she — not from faculties more strong
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign.

My drift I fear

Is scarcely obvious; but, that common sense
May try this modern system by its fruits,
Leave let me take to place before her sight
A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
Full early trained to worship seemliness,
This model of a child is never known
To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
As generous as a fountain; selfishness
May not come near him, nor the little throng

Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path: The wandering beggars propagate his name, Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun. And natural or supernatural fear, Unless it leap upon him in a dream, Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see How arch his notices, how nice his sense Of the ridiculous; not blind is he To the broad follies of the licensed world. Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd, And can read lectures upon innocence: A miracle of scientific lore. Ships he can guide across the pathless sea, And tell you all their cunning; he can read The inside of the earth, and spell the stars; He knows the policies of foreign lands: Can string you names of districts, cities, towns, The whole world over, tight as beads of dew Upon a gossamer thread; he sits, he weighs; All things are put to question; he must live Knowing that he grows wiser every day Or else not live at all, and seeing too Each little drop of wisdom as it falls Into the dimpling cistern of his heart: For this unnatural growth the trainer blame, Pity the tree. — Poor human vanity,

Wert thou extinguished, little would be left Which he could truly love; but how escape? For, ever as a thought of purer birth Rises to lead him toward a better clime. Some intermeddler still is on the watch To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray, Within the pinfold of his own conceit. Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find The playthings, which her love designed for him, Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn. Oh! give us once again the wishing-cap Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood, And Sabra in the forest with St. George! The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
Who, with a broad highway, have over-bridged
The froward chaos of futurity,
Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties,

Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines; when will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us,
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

⁵There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs And islands of Winander! - many a time At evening, when the earliest stars began To move along the edges of the hills, Rising or setting, would be stand alone Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake, And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth Uplifted, he, as through an instrument, Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls. That they might answer him; and they would shout Across the watery vale, and shout again, Responsive to his call, with quivering peals, And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud. Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause

Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old. Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs Upon a slope above the village school, And through that churchyard when my way has led On summer evenings, I believe that there A long half hour together I have stood Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies! Even now appears before the mind's clear eye That self-same village church; I see her sit (The thronèd Lady whom erewhile we hailed) On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy Who slumbers at her feet, — forgetful, too, Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves, And listening only to the gladsome sounds

That, from the rural school ascending, play Beneath her and about her. May she long Behold a race of young ones like to those With whom I herded! — (easily, indeed, We might have fed upon a fatter soil Of arts and letters — but be that forgiven) — A race of real children; not too wise, Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh, And bandied up and down by love and hate; Not unresentful where self-justified; Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy; Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds: Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not In happiness to the happiest upon earth. Simplicity in habit, truth in speech, Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds; May books and Nature be their early joy! And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name — Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week
When I was first intrusted to the care
Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
And brooks were like a dream of novelty

To my half-infant thoughts; that very week, While I was roving up and down alone, Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears, Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake: Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore A heap of garments, as if left by one Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched, But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast, And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped The breathless stillness. The succeeding day, Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale Drew to the spot an anxious crowd; some looked In passive expectation from the shore, While from a boat others hung o'er the deep. Sounding with grappling irons and long poles. At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape Of terror; yet no soul-debasing fear, Young as I was, a child not nine years old, Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen Such sights before, among the shining streams Of faery land, the forest of romance.

Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle With decoration of ideal grace; A dignity, a smoothness, like the works Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

A precious treasure had I long possessed. A little vellow, canvas-covered book, A slender abstract of the Arabian tales: And, from companions in a new abode, When first I learnt that this dear prize of mine Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry — That there were four large volumes, laden all With kindred matter, 't was to me, in truth. A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly, With one not richer than myself, I made A covenant that each should lay aside The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more Till our joint savings had amassed enough To make this book our own. Through several months. In spite of all temptation, we preserved Religiously that vow; but firmness failed, Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house The holidays returned me, there to find That golden store of books which I had left,

What joy was mine! How often in the course
Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind
Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,
For a whole day together, have I lain
Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
And there have read, devouring as I read,
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
I to the sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man; invisibly
It comes, to works of unreproved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.
The tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby; romances; legends penned
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
By the dismantled warrior in old age,
Out of the bowels of those very schemes
In which his youth did first extravagate;
These spread like day, and something in the shape

Of these will live till man shall be no more. Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours, And they must have their food. Our childhood sits. Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne That hath more power than all the elements. I guess not what this tells of Being past, Nor what it augurs of the life to come: But so it is; and, in that dubious hour -That twilight — when we first begin to see This dawning earth, to recognise, expect, And, in the long probation that ensues. The time of trial, ere we learn to live In reconcilement with our stinted powers: To endure this state of meagre vassalage, Unwilling to forego, confess, submit, Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed And humbled down — oh! then we feel, we feel, We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then, Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then. Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape Philosophy will call you: then we feel With what, and how great might ye are in league, Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed, An empire, a possession, — ye whom time And seasons serve; all Faculties to whom

Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay, Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights, Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Relinquishing this lofty eminence
For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
In progress from their native continent
To earth and human life, the Song might dwell
On that delightful time of growing youth,
When craving for the marvellous gives way
To strengthening love for things that we have seen;
When sober truth and steady sympathies,
Offered to notice by less daring pens,
Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves
Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad

At thought of rapture now for ever flown;
Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
To think of, to read over, many a page,
Poems withal of name, which at that time
Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years
Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
With conscious pleasure opened to the charm





Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet For their own sakes, a passion, and a power: And phrases pleased me chosen for delight, For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads Yet unfrequented, while the morning light Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad With a dear friend, and for the better part Of two delightful hours we strolled along By the still borders of the misty lake, Repeating favourite verses with one voice, Or conning more, as happy as the birds That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad, Lifted above the ground by airy fancies, More bright than madness or the dreams of wine; And, though full oft the objects of our love Were false, and in their splendour overwrought, Yet was there surely then no vulgar power Working within us, — nothing less, in truth, Than that most noble attribute of man. Though yet untutored and inordinate, That wish for something loftier, more adorned, Than is the common aspect, daily garb, Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds Of exultation echoed through the groves! For, images, and sentiments, and words, And everything encountered or pursued

In that delicious world of poesy, Kept holiday, a never-ending show; With music, incense, festival, and flowers!

Here must we pause: this only let me add, From heart-experience, and in humblest sense Of modesty, that he, who in his youth A daily wanderer among woods and fields With living Nature hath been intimate, Not only in that raw unpractised time Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are, By glittering verse; but further, doth receive. In measure only dealt out to himself. Knowledge and increase of enduring joy From the great Nature that exists in works Of mighty Poets. Visionary power Attends the motions of the viewless winds. Embodied in the mystery of words: There, darkness makes abode, and all the host Of shadowy things work endless changes, — there, As in a mansion like their proper home, Even forms and substances are circumfused By that transparent veil with light divine, And, through the turnings intricate of verse, Present themselves as objects recognised, In flashes, and with glory not their own.

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

BOOK SIXTH

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

The leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks And the simplicities of cottage life I bade farewell; and, one among the youth Who, summoned by that season, reunite As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure, Went back to Granta's cloisters, not so prompt Or eager, though as gay and undepressed In mind, as when I thence had taken flight A few short months before. I turned my face Without repining from the coves and heights Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern; Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence Of calmer lakes and louder streams; and you, Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland. You and your not unwelcome days of mirth, Relinquished, and your nights of revelry, And in my own unlovely cell sate down In lightsome mood — such privilege has youth That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

The bonds of indolent society
Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
More to myself. Two winters may be passed

Without a separate notice: many books Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused. But with no settled plan. I was detached Internally from academic cares: Yet independent study seemed a course Of hardy disobedience toward friends And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind. This spurious virtue, rather let it bear A name it now deserves, this cowardice. Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love Of freedom which encouraged me to turn From regulations even of my own As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell — Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then And at a later season, or preserved: What love of nature, what original strength Of contemplation, what intuitive truths The deepest and the best, what keen research, Unbiassed, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time; Sweet meditations, the still overflow Of present happiness, while future years Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams, No few of which have since been realised; And some remain, hopes for my future life.

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

Four years and thirty, told this very week, Have I been now a sojourner on earth. By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills. Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days Which also first emboldened me to trust With firmness, hitherto but slightly touched By such a daring thought, that I might leave Some monument behind me which pure hearts Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness, Maintained even by the very name and thought Of printed books and authorship, began To melt away; and further, the dread awe Of mighty names was softened down and seemed Approachable, admitting fellowship Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now, Though not familiarly, my mind put on, Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy.

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
Did I by night frequent the College grove
And tributary walks; the last, and oft
The only one, who had been lingering there
Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell,
A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice;

Inexorable summons! Lofty elms. Inviting shades of opportune recess, Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed, Grew there: an ash which Winter for himself Decked out with pride, and with outlandish grace: Up from the ground, and almost to the top, The trunk and every master branch were green With clustering ivv, and the lightsome twigs And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds That hung in yellow tassels, while the air Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, Or could more bright appearances create Of human forms with superhuman powers. Than I beheld, loitering on calm clear nights Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

On the vague reading of a truant youth 'T were idle to descant. My inner judgment Not seldom differed from my taste in books,

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

As if it appertained to another mind, And yet the books which then I valued most Are dearest to me now: for, having scanned, Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed A standard, often usefully applied. Even when unconsciously, to things removed From a familiar sympathy. — In fine. I was a better judge of thoughts than words, Misled in estimating words, not only By common inexperience of youth, But by the trade in classic niceties, The dangerous craft, of culling term and phrase From languages that want the living voice To carry meaning to the natural heart; To tell us what is passion, what is truth, What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Yet may we not entirely overlook
The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
Of geometric science. Though advanced
In these enquiries, with regret I speak,
No farther than the threshold, there I found
Both elevation and composed delight:
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased
With its own struggles, did I meditate

On the relation those abstractions bear
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads
Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man;
From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
From system on to system without end.

More frequently from the same source I drew
A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
Of permanent and universal sway,
And paramount belief; there, recognised
A type, for finite natures, of the one
Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
Which — to the boundaries of space and time,
Of melancholy space and doleful time,
Superior and incapable of change,
Nor touched by welterings of passion — is,
And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
And silence did await upon these thoughts
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'T is told by one whom stormy waters threw, With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared, Upon a desert coast, that having brought To land a single volume, saved by chance, A treatise of Geometry, he wont,

Although of food and clothing destitute, And beyond common wretchedness depressed, To part from company and take this book (Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths) To spots remote, and draw his diagrams With a long staff upon the sand, and thus Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost Forget his feeling: so (if like effect From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things So different, may rightly be compared), So was it then with me, and so will be With poets ever. Mighty is the charm Of those abstractions to a mind beset With images and haunted by herself, And specially delightful unto me Was that clear synthesis built up aloft So gracefully; even then when it appeared Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy To sense embodied: not the thing it is In verity, an independent world, Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned
By aught, I fear, of genuine desert —
Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes.
And not to leave the story of that time

Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,
Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, autumn than
spring;

A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of youth's contentedness.

— To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang
Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called
"Good-natured lounging," and behold a map
Of my collegiate life — far less intense
Than duty called for, or, without regard
To duty, might have sprung up of itself
By change of accidents, or even, to speak
Without unkindness, in another place.
Yet why take refuge in that plea? — the fault,
This I repeat, was mine; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art,
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest

Between these sundry wanderings with a joy Above all joys, that seemed another morn Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence, Friend, Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine, Now, after separation desolate, Restored to me — such absence that she seemed A gift then first bestowed. The varied banks Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song. And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees, Low standing by the margin of the stream, A mansion visited (as fame reports) By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn, Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love Inspired; — that river and those mouldering towers Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb The darksome windings of a broken stair, And crept along a ridge of fractured wall, Not without trembling, we in safety looked Forth, through some Gothic window's open space, And gathered with one mind a rich reward From the far-stretching landscape, by the light Of morning beautified, or purple eve; Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head, Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers

Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze, Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.

Another maid there was, who also shed A gladness o'er that season, then to me, By her exulting outside look of youth And placid under-countenance, first endeared; That other spirit, Coleridge! who is now So near to us, that meek confiding heart, So reverenced by us both. O'er paths and fields In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes Of eglantine, and through the shady woods, And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste Of naked pools, and common crags that lay Exposed on the bare fell, were scattered love, The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam. O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time. And yet a power is on me, and a strong Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there. Far art thou wandered now in search of health And milder breezes, — melancholy lot! But thou art with us, with us in the past, The present, with us in the times to come. There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair, No languor, no dejection, no dismay, No absence scarcely can there be, for those

Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength, Receive it daily as a joy of ours; Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift Of gales Etesian or of tender thoughts.

I, too, have been a wanderer; but, alas! How different the fate of different men. Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared As if in several elements, we were framed To bend at last to the same discipline. Predestined, if two beings ever were, To seek the same delights, and have one health, One happiness. Throughout this narrative, Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth, And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields, And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee, Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths Of the huge city, on the leaded roof Of that wide edifice, thy school and home, Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired, To shut thine eyes, and by internal light

See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream, Far distant, thus beheld from year to year Of a long exile. Nor could I forget, In this late portion of my argument, That scarcely, as my term of pupilage Ceased, had I left those academic bowers When thou wert thither guided. From the heart Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest, And didst sit down in temperance and peace, A rigorous student. What a stormy course Then followed. Oh! it is a pang that calls For utterance, to think what easy change Of circumstances might to thee have spared A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes, For ever withered. Through this retrospect Of my collegiate life I still have had Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place Present before my eyes, have played with times And accidents as children do with cards. Or as a man, who, when his house is built, A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still, As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside, Rebuild it to his liking. I had thought Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence, And all the strength and plumage of thy youth, Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse

Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms

Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out

From things well-matched or ill, and words for things,

The self-created sustenance of a mind Debarred from Nature's living images. Compelled to be a life unto herself, And unrelentingly possessed by thirst Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone, Ah! surely not in singleness of heart Should I have seen the light of evening fade From smooth Cam's silent waters: had we met. Even at that early time, needs must I trust In the belief, that my maturer age, My calmer habits, and more steady voice, Would with an influence benign have soothed, Or chased away, the airy wretchedness That battened on thy youth. But thou hast trod A march of glory, which doth put to shame These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch On wanderings of my own, that now embraced With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint. A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer, Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff, And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side, Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight, Did this unprecedented course imply, Of college studies and their set rewards; Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me Without uneasy forethought of the pain, The censures, and ill-omening, of those To whom my worldly interests were dear. But Nature then was sovereign in my mind, And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy, Had given a charter to irregular hopes. In any age of uneventful calm Among the nations, surely would my heart Have been possessed by similar desire; But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy, France standing on the top of golden hours, And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced To land at Calais on the very eve Of that great federal day; and there we saw,

In a mean city, and among a few. How bright a face is worn when joy of one Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns, Gaudy with reliques of that festival. Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs, And window-garlands. On the public roads. And, once, three days successively, through paths By which our toilsome journey was abridged, Among sequestered villages we walked And found benevolence and blessedness Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring Hath left no corner of the land untouched: Where elms for many and many a league in files With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads, For ever near us as we paced along: How sweet at such a time, with such delight On every side, in prime of youthful strength, To feed a Poet's tender melancholy And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound Of undulations varying as might please The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once. Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw Dances of liberty, and, in late hours Of darkness, dances in the open air

Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills —

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy, Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone We glided forward with the flowing stream. Swift Rhone! thou wert the wings on which we cut A winding passage with majestic ease Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show Those woods and farms and orchards did present, And single cottages and lurking towns, Reach after reach, succession without end Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along Clustered together with a merry crowd Of those emancipated, a blithe host Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning From the great spousals newly solemnised At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven. Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees: Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy, And with their swords flourished as if to fight The saucy air. In this proud company We landed — took with them our evening meal, Guests welcome almost as the angels were To Abraham of old. The supper done,

With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts We rose at signal given, and formed a ring And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board: All hearts were open, every tongue was loud With amity and glee; we bore a name Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen, And hospitably did they give us hail, As their forerunners in a glorious course; And round and round the board we danced again. With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed At early dawn. The monastery bells Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears; The rapid river flowing without noise, And each uprising or receding spire Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side, Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there Rested within an awful solitude: Yes; for even then no other than a place Of soul-affecting solitude appeared That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen, As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,

Arms flashing, and a military glare Of riotous men commissioned to expel The blameless inmates, and belike subvert That frame of social being, which so long Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things In silence visible and perpetual calm. - "Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!" - The voice Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne; I heard it then and seem to hear it now -"Your impious work forbear, perish what may, Let this one temple last, be this one spot Of earth devoted to eternity!" She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno's pines Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved, And while below, along their several beds, Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death. Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart Responded: "Honour to the patriot's zeal! Glory and hope to new-born Liberty! Hail to the mighty projects of the time! Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires, Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend, Fanned by the breath of angry Providence. But oh! if Past and Future be the wings On whose support harmoniously conjoined

Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare These courts of mystery, where a step advanced Between the portals of the shadowy rocks Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities. For penitential tears and trembling hopes Exchanged — to equalise in God's pure sight Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed With its unworldly votaries, for the sake Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved Through faith and meditative reason, resting Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth. Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim Of that imaginative impulse sent From these majestic floods, you shining cliffs, The untransmuted shapes of many worlds, Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants, These forests unapproachable by death, That shall endure as long as man endures, To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel, To struggle, to be lost within himself In trepidation, from the blank abyss To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled." Not seldom since that moment have I wished That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart, In sympathetic reverence we trod

The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
From their foundation, strangers to the presence
Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay
Upon the open lawns! Vallombre's groves
Entering, we fed the soul with darkness; thence
Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
In different quarters of the bending sky,
The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,
Memorial reverenced by a thousand storms;
Yet then, from the undiscriminating sweep
And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

'T is not my present purpose to retrace
That variegated journey step by step.
A march it was of military speed,
And Earth did change her images and forms
Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
Day after day, up early and down late,
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill
Mounted — from province on to province swept,
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair:
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,

Enticing valleys, greeted them and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
Of salutation were not passed away.
Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen,
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
To patriarchal dignity of mind,
And pure simplicity of wish and will,
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,
Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round

With danger, varying as the seasons change),
Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,
Contented, from the moment that the dawn
(Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
Of soul-illumination) calls him forth
To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,
Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart

Down on a green recess, the first I saw
Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,
Quiet and lorded over and possessed
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
And by the river side.

That very day, From a bare ridge we also first beheld Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved To have a soulless image on the eye That had usurped upon a living thought That never more could be. The wondrous Vale Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice. A motionless array of mighty waves, Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends, And reconciled us to realities: There small birds warble from the leafy trees, The eagle soars high in the element, There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf, The maiden spread the haycock in the sun, While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks. Descending from the mountain to make sport Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. With such a book
Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
And universal reason of mankind,
The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side

Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound
In dreams and fictions, pensively composed:
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
And sober posies of funereal flowers,
Gathered among those solitudes sublime
From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries Mixed something of stern mood, an underthirst Of vigour seldom utterly allayed: And from that source how different a sadness Would issue, let one incident make known. When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road. Following a band of muleteers, we reached A halting-place, where all together took Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide, Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered, Then paced the beaten downward way that led Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off; The only track now visible was one That from the torrent's further brink held forth Conspicuous invitation to ascend

A lofty mountain. After brief delay Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took. And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears Intruded, for we failed to overtake Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance. While every moment added doubt to doubt, A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned That to the spot which had perplexed us first We must descend, and there should find the road. Which in the stony channel of the stream Lav a few steps, and then along its banks: And, that our future course, all plain to sight, Was downwards, with the current of that stream. Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear. For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds. We questioned him again, and yet again; But every word that from the peasant's lips Came in reply, translated by our feelings, Ended in this, — that we had crossed the Alps.

Imagination — here the Power so called Through sad incompetence of human speech, That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps, At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost; Halted without an effort to break through;

But to my conscious soul I now can say — 'I recognise thy glory": in such strength Of usurpation, when the light of sense Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed The invisible world, doth greatness make abode, There harbours; whether we be young or old, Our destiny, our being's heart and home, Is with infinitude, and only there: With hope it is, hope that can never die, Effort, and expectation, and desire, And something evermore about to be. Under such banners militant, the soul Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts That are their own perfection and reward, Strong in herself and in beatitude That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given
Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
And, with the half-shaped road which we had
missed,

Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road⁶

Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait. And with them did we journey several hours At a slow pace. The immeasurable height Of woods decaying, never to be decayed, The stationary blasts of waterfalls. And in the narrow rent at every turn Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn, The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky, The rocks that muttered close upon our ears, Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side As if a voice were in them, the sick sight And giddy prospect of the raving stream, The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens, Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light — Were all like workings of one mind, the features Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree; Characters of the great Apocalypse, The types and symbols of Eternity, Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

That night our lodging was a house that stood
Alone within the valley, at a point
Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled
The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned

By noise of waters, making innocent sleep Lie melancholy among weary bones.

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed, Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified Into a lordly river, broad and deep, Dimpling along in silent majesty, With mountains for its neighbours, and in view Of distant mountains and their snowy tops. And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake, Fit resting-place for such a visitant. Locarno! spreading out in width like Heaven. How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart, Bask in the sunshine of the memory; And Como! thou, a treasure whom the earth Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth Of Abyssinian privacy. I spake Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids; Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines, Winding from house to house, from town to town, Sole link that binds them to each other; walks, League after league, and cloistral avenues. Where silence dwells if music be not there: While yet a youth undisciplined in verse, Through fond ambition of that hour I strove

To chant your praise; nor can approach you now Ungreeted by a more melodious Song, Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze Or sunbeam over your domain I passed In motion without pause; but ye have left Your beauty with me, a serene accord Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed In their submissiveness with power as sweet And gracious, almost, might I dare to say, As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love, Or the remembrance of a generous deed, Or mildest visitations of pure thought, When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked Religiously, in silent blessedness; Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

With those delightful pathways we advanced, For two days' space, in presence of the Lake, That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed A character more stern. The second night, From sleep awakened, and misled by sound Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes Whose import then we had not learned, we rose By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh, And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,

Along the winding margin of the lake, Led, as before, we should behold the scene Hushed in profound repose. We left the town Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon Were lost, bewildered among woods immense, And on a rock sate down, to wait for day. An open place it was, and overlooked, From high, the sullen water far beneath, On which a dull red image of the moon Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep. But could not sleep, tormented by the stings Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon, Filled all the woods: the cry of unknown birds; The mountains more by blackness visible And their own size, than any outward light: The breathless wilderness of clouds: the clock That told, with unintelligible voice, The widely parted hours: the noise of streams. And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand, That did not leave us free from personal fear: And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set Before us, while she still was high in heaven; —

These were our food; and such a summer's night Followed that pair of golden days that shed On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay, Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught With some untried adventure, in a course Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone Be mentioned as a parting word, that not In hollow exultation, dealing out Hyperboles of praise comparative: Not rich one moment to be poor for ever: Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner On outward forms — did we in presence stand Of that magnificent region. On the front Of this whole Song is written that my heart Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up A different worship. Finally, whate'er I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale, Confederate with the current of the soul. To speed my voyage; every sound or sight, In its degree of power, administered

To grandeur or to tenderness, — to the one Directly, but to tender thoughts by means Less often instantaneous in effect; Led me to these by paths that, in the main, Were more circuitous, but not less sure Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,
A happy time that was; triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
Their great expectancy: the fife of war
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening
fast

Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of Liberty.
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
I seemed to move along them, as a bird
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues

Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;
I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help; the ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights,
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

BOOK SEVENTH

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Six changeful years have vanished since I first Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze Which met me issuing from the City's 7 walls) A glad preamble to this Verse: I sang Aloud, with fervour irresistible Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting, From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth (So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream, That flowed awhile with unabating strength, Then stopped for years; not audible again Before last primrose-time. Belovèd Friend! The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts On thy departure to a foreign land Has failed; too slowly moves the promised work. Through the whole summer have I been at rest, Partly from voluntary holiday, And part through outward hindrance. But I heard, After the hour of sunset yester-even, Sitting within doors between light and dark, A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near My threshold, — minstrels from the distant woods Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,

With preparation artful and benign, That the rough lord had left the surly North On his accustomed journey. The delight, Due to this timely notice, unawares Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said. "Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds, Will chant together." Thereafter, as the shades Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume Or canopy of yet unwithered fern, Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here No less than sound had done before: the child Of Summer, lingering, shining, by herself, The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills, Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir Of Winter that had warbled at my door, And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

The last night's genial feeling overflowed Upon this morning, and my favourite grove, Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft, As if to make the strong wind visible, Wakes in me agitations like its own, A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,

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Which we will now resume with lively hope, Nor checked by aught of tamer argument That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade Farewell for ever to the sheltered seats Of gowned students, quitted hall and bower, And every comfort of that privileged ground, Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among The unfenced regions of society.

Yet, undetermined to what course of life
I should adhere, and seeming to possess
A little space of intermediate time
At full command, to London first I turned,
In no disturbance of excessive hope,
By personal ambition unenslaved,
Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown
Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock
Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced
Her endless streets, a transient visitant:
Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind
Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly,
And life and labour seem but one, I filled
An idler's place; an idler well content

To have a house (what matter for a home?)
That owned him; living cheerfully abroad
With unchecked fancy ever on the stir,
And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned Of airy palaces, and gardens built By Genii of romance; or hath in grave Authentic history been set forth of Rome. Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis; Or given upon report by pilgrim friars, Of golden cities ten months' journey deep Among Tartarian wilds — fell short, far short, Of what my fond simplicity believed And thought of London — held me by a chain Less strong of wonder and obscure delight. Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot For me beyond its ordinary mark, 'T were vain to ask; but in our flock of boys Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance Summoned from school to London: fortunate And envied traveller! When the Boy returned, After short absence, curiously I scanned His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth, From disappointment, not to find some change In look and air, from that new region brought,

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As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned him; And every word he uttered, on my ears Fell flatter than a cagèd parrot's note. That answers unexpectedly awry, And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears Almost as deeply seated and as strong In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived For my enjoyment. Would that I could now Recall what then I pictured to myself, Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad. The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last, Nor least, Heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor. Dreams not unlike to those which once begat A change of purpose in young Whittington, When he, a friendless and a drooping boy, Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out Articulate music. Above all, one thought Baffled my understanding: how men lived Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still Strangers, not knowing each the other's name.

Oh, wondrous power of words, by simple faith Licensed to take the meaning that we love! Vauxhall and Ranelagh! I then had heard Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps

Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes, Floating in dance, or warbling high in air The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed With less delight upon that other class Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent: The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's: the tombs Of Westminster: the Giants of Guildhall: Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates. Perpetually recumbent: Statues - man, And the horse under him — in gilded pomp Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares; The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower Where England's sovereigns sit in long array. Their steeds bestriding, — every mimic shape Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore. Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed. Or life or death upon the battle-field. Those bold imaginations in due time Had vanished, leaving others in their stead: And now I looked upon the living scene; Familiarly perused it; oftentimes, In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased Through courteous self-submission, as a tax Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

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Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain Of a too busy world! Before me flow, Thou endless stream of men and moving things! Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes — With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe — On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din; The comers and the goers face to face, Face after face: the string of dazzling wares. Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names, And all the tradesman's honours overhead: Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page, With letters huge inscribed from top to toe, Stationed above the door, like guardian saints; There, allegoric shapes, female or male, Or physiognomies of real men, Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea, Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!
At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,

We take our way. A raree-show is here,
With children gathered round; another street
Presents a company of dancing dogs,
Or dromedary, with an antic pair
Of monkeys on his back; a minstrel band
Of Savoyards; or, single and alone,
An English ballad-singer. Private courts,
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
The very shrillest of all London cries,
May then entangle our impatient steps;
Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares,
To privileged regions and inviolate,
Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach, Following the tide that slackens by degrees, Some half-frequented scenes, where wider streets Bring straggling breezes of suburban air. Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls; Advertisements, of giant-size, from high Press forward, in all colours, on the sight; These, bold in conscious merit, lower down; That, fronted with a most imposing word, Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.

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As on the broadening causeway we advance,
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
'T is one encountered here and everywhere;
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
Another lies at length, beside a range
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,
The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where See, among less distinguishable shapes,
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand;
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images
Upon his head; with basket at his breast
The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm!

Enough; — the mighty concourse I surveyed With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note Among the crowd all specimens of man, Through all the colours which the sun bestows,

And every character of form and face:
The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day, The spectacles within doors, — birds and beasts Of every nature, and strange plants convened From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape The absolute presence of reality. Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land, And what earth is, and what she has to show. I do not here allude to subtlest craft. By means refined attaining purest ends, But imitations, fondly made in plain Confession of man's weakness and his loves. Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill Submits to nothing less than taking in A whole horizon's circuit, do with power, Like that of angels or commissioned spirits. Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle, Or in a ship on waters, with a world Of life, and life-like mockery beneath, Above, behind, far stretching and before;

Or more mechanic artist represent
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
From blended colours also borrowing help,
Some miniature of famous spots or things,—
St. Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
In microscopic vision, Rome herself;
Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,— the Falls
Of Tivoli; and, high upon that steep,
The Sibyl's mouldering Temple! every tree,
Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
Throughout the landscape; tuft, stone scratch minute—
All that the traveller sees when he is there.

Add to these exhibitions, mute and still,
Others of wider scope, where living men,
Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
Diversified the allurement. Need I fear
To mention by its name, as in degree,
Lowest of these and humblest in attempt,
Yet richly graced with honours of her own,
Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time
Intolerant, as is the way of youth
Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add,
With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,
Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,

Amid the uproar of the rabblement, Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds: To note the laws and progress of belief; Though obstinate on this way, yet on that How willingly we travel, and how far! To have, for instance, brought upon the scene The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo! He dons his coat of darkness on the stage Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon Hid in her vacant interlunar cave." Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought? The garb he wears is black as death, the word "Invisible" flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were "forms and pressures of the time," Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed When Art was young; dramas of living men, And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight, Shipwreck, or some domestic incident Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame; Such as the daring brotherhood of late Set forth, too serious theme for that light place — I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn From our own ground, — the Maid of Buttermere, —

And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife Deserted and deceived, the Spoiler came And wooed the artless daughter of the hills. And wedded her, in cruel mockery Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee Must needs bring back the moment when we first, Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name. Beheld her serving at the cottage inn; Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew, With admiration of her modest mien And carriage, marked by unexampled grace. We since that time not unfamiliarly Have seen her, — her discretion have observed, Her just opinions, delicate reserve, Her patience, and humility of mind Unspoiled by commendation and the excess Of public notice — an offensive light To a meek spirit suffering inwardly.

From this memorial tribute to my theme
I was returning, when, with sundry forms
Commingled — shapes which met me in the way
That we must tread — thy image rose again,
Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
Without contamination doth she live

In quietness, without anxiety: Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb That, thither driven from some unsheltered place, Rests underneath the little rock-like pile When storms are raging. Happy are they both— Mother and child! — These feelings, in themselves Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think On those ingenuous moments of our youth Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes And sorrows of the world. Those simple days Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes, Which yet survive in memory, appears One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy, A sportive infant, who, for six months' space, Not more, had been of age to deal about Articulate prattle — Child as beautiful As ever clung around a mother's neck, Or father fondly gazed upon with pride. There, too, conspicuous for stature tall And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused, False tints too well accorded with the glare From play-house lustres thrown without reserve On every object near. The Boy had been The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on

In whatsoever place, but seemed in this A sort of alien scattered from the clouds. Of lusty vigour, more than infantine He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose Just three parts blown — a cottage-child — if e'er. By cottage-door on breezy mountain-side, Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board Decked with refreshments had this child been placed, His little stage in the vast theatre, And there he sate, surrounded with a throng Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men And shameless women, treated and caressed: Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played, While oaths and laughter and indecent speech Were rife about him as the songs of birds Contending after showers. The mother now Is fading out of memory, but I see The lovely Boy as I beheld him then Among the wretched and the falsely gay, Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells Muttered on black and spiteful instigation Have stopped, as some believe, the kindliest growths. Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked

By special privilege of Nature's love, Should in his childhood be retained for ever! But with its universal freight the tide Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent, Mary! may now have lived till he could look With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps, Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills, I heard, and for the first time in my life, The voice of woman utter blasphemy — Saw woman as she is, to open shame Abandoned, and the pride of public vice; I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once Thrown in that from humanity divorced Humanity, splitting the race of man In twain, yet leaving the same outward form. Distress of mind ensued upon the sight, And ardent meditation. Later years Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness, Feelings of pure commiseration, grief For the individual and the overthrow Of her soul's beauty; farther I was then But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take Our argument. Enough is said to show How casual incidents of real life. Observed where pastime only had been sought, Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events And measured passions of the stage, albeit By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power. Yet was the theatre my dear delight; The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls, And all the mean upholstery of the place. Wanted not animation, when the tide Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast With the ever-shifting figures of the scene, Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame Advanced in radiance through a deep recess Of thick entangled forest, like the moon Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state Of the world's greatness, winding round with train Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards; Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling His slender manacles; or romping girl Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire, A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up In all the tatters of infirmity All loosely put together, hobbled in,

Stumping upon a cane with which he smites. From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabout Of one so overloaded with his years. But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace. The antics striving to outstrip each other. Were all received, the least of them not lost, With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night, Between the show, and many-headed mass Of the spectators, and each several nook Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly And with what flashes, as it were, the mind Turned this way — that way! sportive and alert And watchful, as a kitten when at play, While winds are eddying round her, among straws And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet! Romantic almost, looked at through a space, How small, of intervening years! For then, Though surely no mean progress had been made In meditations holy and sublime, Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss Of novelty survived for scenes like these; Enjoyment haply handed down from times When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance Caught, on a summer evening through a chink

In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
Gladdened me more than if I had been led
Into a dazzling cavern of romance,
Crowded with Genii busy among works
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem. To many, neither dignified enough Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them. Who, looking inward, have observed the ties That bind the perishable hours of life Each to the other, and the curious props By which the world of memory and thought Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes. Such as at least do wear a prouder face, Solicit our regard; but when I think Of these, I feel the imaginative power Languish within me; even then it slept, When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth. For though I was most passionately moved And yielded to all changes of the scene With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;

Save when realities of act and mien,
The incarnation of the spirits that move
In harmony amid the Poet's world,
Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth
By power of contrast, made me recognise,
As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
When, having closed the mighty Shakspeare's page,
I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.

Pass we from entertainments, that are such Professedly, to others titled higher, Yet, in the estimate of youth at least, More near akin to those than names imply, -I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts Before the ermined judge, or that great stage Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform, Admired and envied. Oh! the beating heart, When one among the prime of these rose up, — One, of whose name from childhood we had heard Familiarly, a household term, like those, The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old, Whom the fifth Harry talks of. Silence! hush! This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit, No stammerer of a minute, painfully Delivered. No! the Orator hath voked

The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car:
Thrice welcome Presence! how can patience e'er
Grow weary of attending on a track
That kindles with such glory! All are charmed,
Astonished; like a hero in romance,
He winds away his never-ending horn;
Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:
What memory and what logic! till the strain
Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed,
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced By specious wonders, and too slow to tell Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men, Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides, And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught, Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue — Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave. I see him, — old, but vigorous in age, — Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe The younger brethren of the grove. But some — While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth, Against all systems built on abstract rights, Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;

Declares the vital power of social ties Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain, Exploding upstart Theory, insists Upon the allegiance to which men are born — Some — say at once a froward multitude — Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved) As the winds fret within the Æolian cave. Galled by their monarch's chain. The times were big With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised; But memorable moments intervened. When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain, Broke forth in armour of resplendent words, Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved Under the weight of classic eloquence, Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
Endowed with various power to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!—
There have I seen a comely bachelor,

Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up, And, in a tone elaborately low Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth. From time to time, into an orifice Most delicate, a lurking evelet, small, And only not invisible, again Open it out, diffusing thence a smile Of rapt irradiation, exquisite. Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job. Moses, and he who penned, the other day, The Death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme With fancies thick as his inspiring stars, And Ossian (doubt not — 't is the naked truth) Summoned from streamy Morven — each and all Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains, To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks, Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall, Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop, In public room or private, park or street,

Each fondly reared on his own pedestal. Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice, Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress. And all the strife of singularity, Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense — Of these, and of the living shapes they wear, There is no end. Such candidates for regard, Although well pleased to be where they were found. I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize, Nor made unto myself a secret boast Of reading them with quick and curious eye; But, as a common produce, things that are To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them Such willing note, as, on some errand bound That asks not speed, a traveller might bestow On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach. Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
Though most at home in this their dear domain,
Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
Me, rather, it employed, to note, and keep
In memory, those individual sights
Of courage, or integrity, or truth,
Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,

Appeared more touching. One will I select — A Father — for he bore that sacred name; — Him saw I, sitting in an open square, Upon a corner-stone of that low wall, Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air. Of those who passed, and me who looked at him, He took no heed; but in his brawny arms (The Artificer was to the elbow bare. And from his work this moment had been stolen) He held the child, and, bending over it, As if he were afraid both of the sun And of the air, which he had come to seek, Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top
Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so
That huge fermenting mass of human-kind
Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief,
To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
For feeling and contemplative regard,
More than inherent liveliness and power.
How oft, amid those overflowing streets,

Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said Unto myself, "The face of every one That passes by me is a mystery!" Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed By thoughts of what and whither, when and how, Until the shapes before my eyes became A second-sight procession, such as glides Over still mountains, or appears in dreams: And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond The reach of common indication, lost Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare) Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face, Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest Wearing a written paper, to explain His story, whence he came, and who he was. Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round As with the might of waters; and apt type This label seemed of the utmost we can know, Both of ourselves and of the universe: And, on the shape of that unmoving man, His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed, As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things, Structures like these the excited spirit mainly

Builds for herself; scenes different there are, Full-formed, that take, with small internal help, Possession of the faculties, — the peace That comes with night; the deep solemnity Of nature's intermediate hours of rest. When the great tide of human life stands still: The business of the day to come, unborn, Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave: The blended calmness of the heavens and earth, Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds Unfrequent as in deserts: at late hours Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains Are falling hard, with people yet astir, The feeble salutation from the voice Of some unhappy woman, now and then Heard as we pass, when no one looks about, Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear, Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not. As the mind answers to them, or the heart Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then, To times, when half the city shall break out Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear? To executions, to a street on fire, Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights Take one, — that ancient festival, the Fair, Holden where martyrs suffered in past time.

And named of St. Bartholomew: there, see A work completed to our hands, that lays, If any spectacle on earth can do, The whole creative powers of man asleep! — For once, the Muse's help will we implore, And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings, Above the press and danger of the crowd. Upon some showman's platform. What a shock For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din, Barbarian and infernal, — a phantasma, Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound! Below, the open space, through every nook Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive With heads; the midway region, and above. Is throughd with staring pictures and huge scrolls, Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies: With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles, And children whirling in their roundabouts; With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes, And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons Grimacing, writhing, screaming, — him who grinds The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves, Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum, And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks, The silver-colored Negro with his timbrel,

Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,

Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering

plumes. —

All moveables of wonder, from all parts, Are here — Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs, The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig, The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire, Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl. The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes, The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows, All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things, All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts Of man, his dulness, madness, and their feats All jumbled up together, to compose A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill, Are vomiting, receiving on all sides, Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms,

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
Of what the mighty City is herself,
To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the same perpetual whirl
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences

That have no law, no meaning, and no end — Oppression, under which even highest minds Must labour, whence the strongest are not free. But though the picture weary out the eye, By nature an unmanageable sight, It is not wholly so to him who looks In steadiness, who hath among least things An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. This, of all acquisitions, first awaits On sundry and most widely different modes Of education, nor with least delight On that through which I passed. Attention springs, And comprehensiveness and memory flow, From early converse with the works of God Among all regions; chiefly where appear Most obviously simplicity and power. Think, how the everlasting streams and woods. Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt The roving Indian, on his desert sands: What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye: And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone, Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft Armies of clouds, — even so, its powers and aspects

Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,

However multitudinous, to move
With order and relation. This, if still,
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
Not violating any just restraint,
As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
This did I feel, in London's vast domain.
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

BOOK EIGHTH

RETROSPECT — LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO
LOVE OF MAN

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard Up to thy summit, through the depth of air Ascending, as if distance had the power To make the sounds more audible? What crowd Covers, or sprinkles o'er, von village green? Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee, Though but a little family of men. Shepherds and tillers of the ground — betimes Assembled with their children and their wives. And here and there a stranger interspersed. They hold a rustic fair — a festival, Such as, on this side now, and now on that, Repeated through his tributary vales, Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest, Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head. Delightful day it is for all who dwell In this secluded glen, and eagerly They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon, From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep

RETROSPECT

Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.

The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice

Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.

Booths are there none; a stall or two is here;

A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,

The other to make music; hither, too,

From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,

Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—

Some aged woman finds her way again, Year after year, a punctual visitant! There also stands a speech-maker by rote. Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show; And in the lapse of many years may come Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid. But one there is, the loveliest of them all, Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out For gains, and who that sees her would not buy? Fruits of her father's orchard are her wares. And with the ruddy produce she walks round Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed Of, her new office, blushing restlessly. The children now are rich, for the old to-day Are generous as the young; and, if content With looking on, some ancient wedded pair

Sit in the shade together; while they gaze. "A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow. The days departed start again to life, And all the scenes of childhood reappear. Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve."9 Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail. Spreading from young to old, from old to young, And no one seems to want his share. — Immense Is the recess, the circumambient world Magnificent, by which they are embraced: They move about upon the soft green turf: How little they, they and their doings, seem, And all that they can further or obstruct! Through utter weakness pitiably dear, As tender infants are: and yet how great! For all things serve them: them the morning light Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks; And them the silent rocks, which now from high Look down upon them; the reposing clouds; The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts: And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir Which animates this day their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel, In that enormous City's turbulent world

RETROSPECT

Of men and things, what benefit I owed To thee, and those domains of rural peace, Where to the sense of beauty first my heart Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees, Or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight Of the Tartarian dynasty composed (Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous, China's stupendous mound) by patient toil Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help; There, in a clime from widest empire chosen, Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?) A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts With temples crested, bridges, gondolas, Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt Into each other their obsequious hues, Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase, Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth In no discordant opposition, strong And gorgeous as the colours side by side Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds: And mountains over all, embracing all; And all the landscape, endlessly enriched With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
Where I was reared; in Nature's primitive gifts
Favoured no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons as they change,
Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Cheerfully led to individual ends
Or social, and still followed by a train
Unwooed, unthought-of even—simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace.

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
Would to a child be transport over-great,
When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
Would leave behind a dance of images,
That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks;
Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
And ordinary interests of man,
Which they embosom, all without regard
As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
Insensibly, each with the other's help.
For me, when my affections first were led
From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake





RETROSPECT

Love for the human creature's absolute self, That noticeable kindliness of heart Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most, Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks And occupations which her beauty adorned. And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first: Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds. With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives Left, even to us toiling in this late day, A bright tradition of the golden age: Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses Sequestered, handed down among themselves Felicity, in Grecian song renowned: Nor such as — when an adverse fate had driven, From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes Entered, with Shakspeare's genius, the wild woods Of Arden — amid sunshine or in shade Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours. Ere Phœbe sighed for the false Ganymede: Or there where Perdita and Florizel Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King: Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is, That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen) Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far Their May-bush, and along the streets in flocks Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,

Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that
decked

Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar; and of youths,
Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,
To drink the waters of some sainted well,
And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;
But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:
The times, too sage, perhaps too proud. have
dropped

These lighter graces; and the rural ways
And manners which my childhood looked upon
Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
Intent on little but substantial needs,
Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
But images of danger and distress,
Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms;
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; nor was free
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
Wanting, — the tragedies of former times,
Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks
Immutable, and everflowing streams,
Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

RETROSPECT

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time, Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks Of delicate Galesus; and no less Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores: Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd To triumphs and to sacrificial rites Devoted, on the inviolable stream Of rich Clitumnus; and the goat-herd lived As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks With tutelary music, from all harm The fold protecting. I myself, mature In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild, Though under skies less generous, less serene: There, for her own delight had Nature framed A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse Of level pasture, islanded with groves And banked with woody risings; but the Plain Endless, here opening widely out, and there Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn And intricate recesses, creek or bay Sheltered within a shelter, where at large The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home. Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides

All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear His flageolet to liquid notes of love Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far. Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space Where passage opens, but the same shall have In turn its visitant, telling there his hours In unlaborious pleasure, with no task More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds, When through the region he pursues at will His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life I saw when, from the melancholy walls Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed My daily walk along that wide champaign, That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west, And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you Moors, mountains, headlands, and ve hollow vales, Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice, Powers of my native region! Ye that seize The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds, That howl so dismally for him who treads Companionless your awful solitudes! There, 't is the shepherd's task the winter long To wait upon the storms: of their approach

RETROSPECT

Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives His flock, and thither from the homestead bears A toilsome burden up the craggy ways, And deals it out, their regular nourishment Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs. And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs Higher and higher, him his office leads To watch their goings, whatsoever track The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat, Than he lies down upon some shining rock, And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen, As is their wont, a pittance from strict time, For rest not needed or exchange of love, Then from his couch he starts: and now his feet Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies, His staff protending like a hunter's spear, Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag, And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams. Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call, Might deign to follow him through what he does

Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels, In those vast regions where his service lies. A freeman, wedded to his life of hope And hazard, and hard labour interchanged With that majestic indolence so dear To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus, I felt his presence in his own domain. As of a lord and master, or a power, Or genius, under Nature, under God, Presiding; and severest solitude Had more commanding looks when he was there. When up the lonely brooks on rainy days Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes Have glanced upon him distant a few steps, In size a giant, stalking through thick fog, His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow, His form hath flashed upon me, glorified By the deep radiance of the setting sun: Or him have I descried in distant sky, A solitary object and sublime, Above all height! like an aerial cross Stationed alone upon a spiry rock Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man Ennobled outwardly before my sight,

RETROSPECT

And thus my heart was early introduced To an unconscious love and reverence Of human nature: hence the human form To me became an index of delight, Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. Meanwhile this creature — spiritual almost As those of books, but more exalted far: Far more of an imaginative form Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour, In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst — Was, for the purposes of kind, a man With the most common; husband, father; learned, Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear; Of this I little saw, cared less for it. But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances —

Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man—
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore! But blessed be the God

Of Nature and of Man that this was so: That men before my inexperienced eyes Did first present themselves thus purified. Removed, and to a distance that was fit: And so we all of us in some degree Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led, And howsoever: were it otherwise, And we found evil fast as we find good In our first years, or think that it is found, How could the innocent heart bear up and live! But doubly fortunate my lot; not here Alone, that something of a better life Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege Of most to move in, but that first I looked At Man through objects that were great or fair; First communed with him by their help. And thus Was founded a sure safeguard and defence Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares, Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in On all sides from the ordinary world In which we traffic. Starting from this point I had my face turned toward the truth, began With an advantage furnished by that kind Of prepossession, without which the soul Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good, No genuine insight ever comes to her.

Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
Happy, and now most thankful that my walk
Was guarded from too early intercourse
With the deformities of crowded life,
And those ensuing laughters and contempts,
Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,
Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
That to devotion willingly would rise,
Into the temple and the temple's heart.

Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me
Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities, and all
Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped
And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
For her own sake, became my joy, even then —
And upwards through late youth, until not less
Than two-and-twenty summers had been told —
Was Man in my affections and regards
Subordinate to her, her visible forms
And viewless agencies: a passion, she,

A rapture often, and immediate love
Ever at hand; he, only a delight
Occasional, an accidental grace,
His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
My spirit to that gentleness of love,
(Though they had long been carefully observed),
Won from me those minute obeisances
Of tenderness, which I may number now
With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

But when that first poetic faculty
Of plain Imagination and severe,
No longer a mute influence of the soul,
Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
To try her strength among harmonious words;
And to book-notions and the rules of art
Did knowingly conform itself; there came
Among the simple shapes of human life
A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;
And Nature and her objects beautified
These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn,
They burnished her. From touch of this new power
Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew

Beside the well-known charnel-house had then
A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,
That took his station there for ornament:
The dignities of plain occurrence then
Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps
To the cold grave in which her husband slept,
One night, or haply more than one, through pain
Or hali-insensate impotence of mind,
The fact was caught at greedily, and there
She must be visitant the whole year through,
Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue
These cravings; when the foxglove, one by one,
Upwards through every stage of the tall stem,
Had shed beside the public way its bells,
And stood of all dismantled, save the last
Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed
To bend as doth a slender blade of grass
Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat,
Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still
With this last relic, soon itself to fall,
Some vagrant mother, whose arch little ones,

All unconcerned by her dejected plight, Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands Gathered the purple cups that round them lay, Strewing the turf's green slope.

A diamond light

(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth Seated, with open door, often and long Upon this restless lustre have I gazed, That made my fancy restless as itself. 'T was now for me a burnished silver shield Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood: An entrance now into some magic cave Or palace built by fairies of the rock; Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant The spectacle, by visiting the spot. Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood, Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred By pure Imagination: busy Power She was, and with her ready pupil turned Instinctively to human passions, then Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich

As mine was through the bounty of a grand And lovely region, I had forms distinct To steady me: each airy thought revolved Round a substantial centre, which at once Incited it to motion, and controlled. I did not pine like one in cities bred. As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend! Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm, If, when the woodman languished with disease Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise, I called the pangs of disappointed love, And all the sad etcetera of the wrong, To help him to his grave? Meanwhile the man, If not already from the woods retired To die at home, was haply, as I knew, Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs, Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost Or spirit that full soon must take her flight. Nor shall we not be tending towards that point Of sound humanity to which our Tale Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I show

How Fancy, in a season when she wove Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call Some pensive musings which might well beseem Maturer years.

A grove there is whose boughs Stretch from the western marge of Thurstonmere, With length of shade so thick, that whose glides Along the line of low-roofed water, moves As in a cloister. Once — while, in that shade Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed In silent beauty on the naked ridge Of a high eastern hill — thus flowed my thoughts In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart: ¹⁰ Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close My mortal course, there will I think on you; Dying, will cast on you a backward look; Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale Is no where touched by one memorial gleam) Doth with the fond remains of his last power Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds, On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

Enough of humble arguments; recall,
My Song! those high emotions which thy voice
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Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired, When everywhere a vital pulse was felt, And all the several frames of things, like stars, Through every magnitude distinguishable. Shone mutually indebted, or half lost Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man. Outwardly, inwardly contemplated, As, of all visible natures, crown, though born Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being, Both in perception and discernment, first In every capability of rapture, Through the divine effect of power and love; As, more than anything we know, instinct With godhead, and, by reason and by will, Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved, Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes Of vice and folly thrust upon my view, Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn, Manners and characters discriminate, And little bustling passions that eclipse, As well they might, the impersonated thought, The idea, or abstraction of the kind.

An idler among academic bowers,
Such was my new condition, as at large
Has been set forth; yet here the vulgar light
Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times,
Old usages and local privilege,
Was welcomed, softened, if not solemnised.
This notwithstanding, being brought more near
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
I trembled, — thought, at times, of human life
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led Gravely to ponder — judging between good And evil, not as for the mind's delight But for her guidance — one who was to act, As sometimes to the best of feeble means I did, by human sympathy impelled: And, through dislike and most offensive pain, Was to the truth conducted; of this faith Never forsaken, that, by acting well,

And understanding, I should learn to love The end of life, and everything we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times Thou canst put on an aspect most severe: London, to thee I willingly return. Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers Enwrought upon thy mantle; satisfied With that amusement, and a simple look Of child-like inquisition now and then Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect Some inner meanings which might harbour there. But how could I in mood so light indulge, Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day, When, having thridded the long labyrinth Of the suburban villages, I first Entered thy vast dominion? On the roof Of an itinerant vehicle I sate. With vulgar men about me, trivial forms Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things, — Mean shapes on every side: but, at the instant, When to myself it fairly might be said, The threshold now is overpast, (how strange That aught external to the living mind Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was), A weight of ages did at once descend

Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power, —
Power growing under weight: alas! I feel
That I am trifling: 't was a moment's pause, —
All that took place within me came and went
As in a moment; yet with Time it dwells,
And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day, Hath passed with torches into some huge cave, The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den In old time haunted by that Danish Witch, Yordas: he looks around and sees the vault Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees, Erelong, the massy roof above his head, That instantly unsettles and recedes, — Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all Commingled, making up a canopy Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape That shift and vanish, change and interchange Like spectres, — ferment silent and sublime! That after a short space works less and less, Till, every effort, every motion gone, The scene before him stands in perfect view Exposed, and lifeless as a written book!— But let him pause awhile, and look again,

And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass,
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled, — here is shadowed forth
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape, — there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail,
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff:
Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved,
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,
As I explored the vast metropolis,
Fount of my country's destiny and the world's;
That great emporium, chronicle at once
And burial-place of passions, and their home
Imperial, their chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did Of past and present, such a place must needs Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time Far less than craving power; yet knowledge came, Sought or unsought, and influxes of power

Came, of themselves, or at her call derived
In fits of kindliest apprehensiveness,
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me
A correspondent amplitude of mind;
Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
Of evidence from monuments, erect,
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn
From books and what they picture and record.

'T is true, the history of our native land — With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,

And in our high-wrought modern narratives
Stript of their harmonising soul, the life
Of manners and familiar incidents —
Had never much delighted me. And less
Than other intellects had mine been used
To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
Of record or tradition; but a sense

Of what in the Great City had been done
And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,
Weighed with me, could support the test of
thought;

And, in despite of all that had gone by. Or was departing never to return, There I conversed with majesty and power Like independent natures. Hence the place Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds In which my early feelings had been nursed — Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks, And audible seclusions, dashing lakes, Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags That into music touch the passing wind. Here then my young imagination found No uncongenial element; could here Among new objects serve or give command, Even as the heart's occasions might require, To forward reason's else too-scrupulous march. The effect was, still more elevated views Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt, Debasement undergone by body or mind, Nor all the misery forced upon my sight, Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust In what we may become; induce belief

That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
A solitary, who with vain conceits
Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
Lo! everything that was indeed divine
Retained its purity inviolate,
Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
Set off; such opposition as aroused
The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
¹¹Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
More orient in the western cloud, that drew
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.

Add also, that among the multitudes
Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
Is possible, the unity of man,
One spirit over ignorance and vice
Predominant, in good and evil hearts;
One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus
By a sublime idea, whencesoe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God.

Thus from a very early age, O Friend!

My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn

To human-kind, and to the good and ill

Of human life: Nature had led me on;

And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed

To travel independent of her help,

As if I had forgotten her; but no,

The world of human-kind outweighed not hers

In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,

Though filling daily, still was light, compared

With that in which her mighty objects lay.

BOOK NINTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

Even as a river, — partly (it might seem) Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed In part by fear to shape a way direct, That would engulph him soon in the ravenous sea — Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, Seeking the very regions which he crossed In his first outset; so have we, my Friend! Turned and returned with intricate delay. Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow Of some aerial Down, while there he halts For breathing-time, is tempted to review The region left behind him; and, if aught Deserving notice have escaped regard, Or been regarded with too careless eye, Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more

Last look, to make the best amends he may: So have we lingered. Now we start afresh With courage, and new hope risen on our toil. Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness, Whene'er it comes! needful in work so long, Thrice needful to the argument which now Awaits us! Oh, how much unlike the past!

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,

I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,

Month after month. Obscurely did I live,

Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,

By literature, or elegance, or rank,

Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent

Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,

With less regret for its luxurious pomp,

And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,

Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,

Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps. But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff, And all enjoyment which the summer sun Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day With motion constant as his own, I went Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town, Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there Sojourning a few days, I visited
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,

And from Mont Martre southward to the Dome Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous Halls, The National Synod and the Jacobins, I saw the Revolutionary Power Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms; The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge Of Orleans: coasted round and round the line Of Tayern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop, Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk Of all who had a purpose, or had not; I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears, To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild! And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes, In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear, But seemed there present; and I scanned them all, Watched every gesture uncontrollable, Of anger, and vexation, and despite, All side by side, and struggling face to face, With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun, And from the rubbish gathered up a stone, And pocketed the relic, in the guise Of an enthusiast: yet, in honest truth,

I looked for something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
For 't is most certain, that these various sights,
However potent their first shock, with me
Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
Pale and bedropped with overflowing tears.

But hence to my more permanent abode I hasten; there, by novelties in speech, Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks, And all the attire of ordinary life, Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused, I stood 'mid those concussions, unconcerned, Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace, While every bush and tree, the country through, Is shaking to the roots: indifference this Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed Into a theatre, whose stage was filled And busy with an action far advanced. Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read

With care, the master pamphlets of the day; Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk And public news; but having never seen A chronicle that might suffice to show Whence the main organs of the public power Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how Accomplished, giving thus unto events A form and body; all things were to me Loose and disjointed, and the affections left Without a vital interest. At that time, Moreover, the first storm was overblown, And the strong hand of outward violence Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear Now, in connection with so great a theme, To speak (as I must be compelled to do) Of one so unimportant; night by night Did I frequent the formal haunts of men, Whom, in the city, privilege of birth Sequestered from the rest, societies Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed; Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse Of good and evil of the time was shunned With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew Into a noisier world, and thus ere long

Became a patriot; and my heart was all Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers, Then stationed in the city, were the chief Of my associates: some of these wore swords That had been seasoned in the wars, and all Were men well-born; the chivalry of France. In age and temper differing, they had yet One spirit ruling in each heart; alike (Save only one, hereafter to be named) Were bent upon undoing what was done: This was their rest and only hope; therewith No fear had they of bad becoming worse, For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred. Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir, In anything, save only as the act Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years, Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile He had sate lord in many tender hearts: Though heedless of such honours now, and changed: His temper was quite mastered by the times, And they had blighted him, had eaten away The beauty of his person, doing wrong Alike to body and to mind: his port, Which once had been erect and open, now

Was stooping and contracted, and a face, Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed, As much as any that was ever seen, A ravage out of season, made by thoughts Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour, That from the press of Paris duly brought Its freight of public news, the fever came, A punctual visitant, to shake this man, Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek Into a thousand colours: while he read. Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch Continually, like an uneasy place In his own body. 'T was in truth an hour Of universal ferment: mildest men Were agitated; and commotions, strife . Of passion and opinion, filled the walls Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds. The soil of common life was, at that time, Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then, And not then only, "What a mockery this Of history, the past and that to come! Now do I feel how all men are deceived. Reading of nations and their works, in faith, Faith given to vanity and emptiness; Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect

To future times the face of what now is!"

The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
Devoured by locusts, — Carra, Gorsas, — add
A hundred other names, forgotten now,
Nor to be heard of more; yet they were powers,
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
And felt through every nook of town and field.

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief Of my associates stood prepared for flight To augment the band of emigrants in arms Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued With foreign foes mustered for instant war. This was their undisguised intent, and they Were waiting with the whole of their desires The moment to depart.

An Englishman,
Born in a land whose very name appeared
To license some unruliness of mind;
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books To reason well of polity or law, And nice distinctions, then on every tongue, Of natural rights and civil; and to acts Of nations and their passing interests (If with unworldly ends and aims compared) Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale Prizing but little otherwise than I prized Tales of the poets, as it made the heart Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms, Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds; Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp Of orders and degrees, I nothing found Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth, That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned And ill could brook, beholding that the best Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least

Of many benefits, in later years Derived from academic institutes And rules, that they held something up to view Of a Republic, where all stood thus far Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all In honour, as in one community, Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore, Distinction open lay to all that came, And wealth and titles were in less esteem Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry. Add unto this, subservience from the first To presences of God's mysterious power Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty, And fellowship with venerable books, To sanction the proud workings of the soul. And mountain liberty. It could not be But that one tutored thus should look with awe Upon the faculties of man, receive Gladly the highest promises, and hail, As best, the government of equal rights And individual worth. And hence, O Friend! If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced Less than might well befit my youth, the cause In part lay here, that unto me the events Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course, A gift that was come rather late than soon.

No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
Forth like a Polar summer: every word
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
In gallant soldiership, and posting on
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
Yet at this very moment do tears start
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep —
I wept not then, — but tears have dimmed my sight,
In memory of the farewells of that time,
Domestic severings, female fortitude
At dearest separation, patriot love
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,

Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
And for a moment, men from far with sound
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
Entering the city, here and there a face,
Or person, singled out among the rest,
Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;
Even by these passing spectacles my heart
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully deprayed,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
Already hinted at, of other mould —
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different cast. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made him more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events

Of that great change wandered in perfect faith, As through a book, an old romance, or tale Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked With the most noble, but unto the poor Among mankind he was in service bound, As by some tie invisible, oaths professed To a religious order. Man he loved As man; and, to the mean and the obscure, And all the homely in their homely works, Transferred a courtesy which had no air Of condescension: but did rather; seem A passion and a gallantry, like that Which he, a soldier, in his idler day Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was, Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity, But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy Diffused around him, while he was intent On works of love or freedom, or revolved Complacently the progress of a cause, Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek And placid, and took nothing from the man That was delightful. Oft in solitude With him did I discourse about the end Of civil government, and its wisest forms: Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,

Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest strives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off

From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home. We added dearest themes —
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
That would be found in all recorded time,
Of truth preserved and error passed away;
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
And how the multitudes of men will feed
And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen
They are to put the appropriate nature on,
Triumphant over every obstacle
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
And what they do and suffer for their creed;

How far they travel, and how long endure;
How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
From least beginnings; how, together locked
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
To aspirations then of our own minds
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
A living confirmation of the whole
Before us, in a people from the depth
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,
Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
On rational liberty, and hope in man,
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—
Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
If nature then be standing on the brink
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice

Of one devoted, — one whom circumstance Hath called upon to embody his deep sense In action, give it outwardly a shape, And that of benediction, to the world. Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth, — A hope it is, and a desire; a creed Of zeal, by an authority Divine Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death. Such conversation, under Attic shades, Did Dion hold with Plato; ripened thus For a Deliverer's glorious task, — and such He, on that ministry already bound, Held with Eudemus and Timonides. Surrounded by adventurers in arms, When those two vessels with their daring freight, For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow, Sailed from Zacynthus, — philosophic war, Led by Philosophers. With harder fate, Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend! Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis (let the name Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity) Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse, With like persuasion honoured, we maintained: He, on his part, accoutred for the worst, He perished fighting, in supreme command, Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,

For liberty, against deluded men, His fellow-countrymen; and yet most blessed In this, that he the fate of later times Lived not to see, nor what we now behold, Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk: Or in wide forests of continuous shade, Lofty and over-arched, with open space Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile — A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts, From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought, And let remembrance steal to other times, When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad, And smooth as marble or a waveless sea, Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace In sylvan meditation undisturbed: As on the pavement of a Gothic church Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired, In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard, — Heard, though unseen, — a devious traveller, Retiring or approaching from afar With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs From the hard floor reverberated, then

It was Angelica thundering through the woods Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid Erminia, fugitive as fair as she. Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar. In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst, A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall. The width of those huge forests, unto me A novel scene, did often in this way Master my fancy while I wandered on With that revered companion. And sometimes — When to a convent in a meadow green. By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile, And not by reverential touch of Time Dismantled, but by violence abrupt — In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies, In spite of real fervour, and of that Less genuine and wrought up within myself — I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh, And for the Matin-bell to sound no more Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign

(How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!) Of hospitality and peaceful rest. And when the partner of those varied walks Pointed upon occasion to the site Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings, To the imperial edifice of Blois, Or to that rural castle, name now slipped From my remembrance, where a lady lodged, By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him In chains of mutual passion, from the tower, As a tradition of the country tells, Practised to commune with her royal knight By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath; Even here, though less than with the peaceful house Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds, Imagination, potent to inflame At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn, Did also often mitigate the force Of civic prejudice, the bigotry, So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind; And on these spots with many gleams I looked Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less, Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one

Is law for all, and of that barren pride In them who, by immunities unjust, Between the sovereign and the people stand, His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold Daily upon me, mixed with pity too And love; for where hope is, there love will be For the abject multitude. And when we chanced One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl, Who crept along fitting her languid gait Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands Was busy knitting in a heartless mood Of solitude, and at the sight my friend In agitation said, "'T is against that That we are fighting," I with him believed That a benignant spirit was abroad Which might not be withstood, that poverty Abject as this would in a little time Be found no more, that we should see the earth Unthwarted in her wish to recompense The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil, All institutes for ever blotted out That legalised exclusion, empty pomp Abolished, sensual state and cruel power Whether by edict of the one or few;

And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
Was not this single confidence enough
To animate the mind that ever turned
A thought to human welfare? That henceforth
Captivity by mandate without law
Should cease; and open accusation lead
To sentence in the hearing of the world,
And open punishment, if not the air
Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
Dread nothing. From this height I shall not
stoop

To humbler matter that detained us oft
In thought or conversation, public acts,
And public persons, and emotions wrought
Within the breast, as ever-varying winds
Of record or report swept over us;
But I might here, instead, repeat a tale, 12
Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,

How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus The story might begin,) oh, balmy time, In which a love-knot, on a lady's brow, Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven! So might—and with that prelude did begin The record; and, in faithful verse, was given The doleful sequel.

But our little bark
On a strong river boldly hath been launched;
And from the driving current should we turn
To loiter wilfully within a creek,
Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains
lost:

For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named
The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
Tears from the hearts of others, when their own
Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there may'st read,
At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
By public power abased, to fatal crime,
Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust
Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
Harassing both; until he sank and pressed
The couch his fate had made for him; supine,
Save when the stings of viperous remorse,

Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,
Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind;
There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more;
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
Rouse him; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
His days he wasted, — an imbecile mind.

BOOK TENTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE (continued)

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness,—
A day as beautiful as e'er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on,
Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne
The King had fallen, and that invading host—
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was
written

The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it — on the plains of Liberty
Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
They — who had come elate as eastern hunters
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
Rajahs and Omrahs in his train, intent
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,

Before the point of the life-threatening spear
Narrowing itself by moments — they, rash men,
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled
In terror. Disappointment and dismay
Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
With evil expectations; confidence
And perfect triumph for the better cause.

The State — as if to stamp the final seal On her security, and to the world Show what she was, a high and fearless soul, Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt With spiteful gratitude the baffled League, That had stirred up her slackening faculties To a new transition — when the King was crushed, Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste Assumed the body and venerable name Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes, 'T is true, had gone before this hour, dire work Of massacre, in which the senseless sword Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past, Earth free from them for ever, as was thought, — Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once! Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned. And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt. The spacious city, and in progress passed The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay, Associate with his children and his wife In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed With roar of cannon by a furious host. I crossed the square (an empty area then!) Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed On this and other spots, as doth a man Upon a volume whose contents he knows Are memorable, but from him locked up. Being written in a tongue he cannot read, So that he questions the mute leaves with pain, And half upbraids their silence. But that night I felt most deeply in what world I was, What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed. High was my room and lonely, near the roof Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge That would have pleased me in more quiet times; Nor was it wholly without pleasure then. With unextinguished taper I kept watch, Reading at intervals; the fear gone by Pressed on me almost like a fear to come. I thought of those September massacres,

Divided from me by one little month, Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up From tragic fictions or true history, Remembrances and dim admonishments. The horse is taught his manage, and no star Of wildest course but treads back his own steps; For the spent hurricane the air provides As fierce a successor: the tide retreats But to return out of its hiding-place In the great deep; all things have second birth: The earthquake is not satisfied at once; And in this way I wrought upon myself, Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried. To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance Fled with the voice to which it had given birth; But vainly comments of a calmer mind Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness. The place, all hushed and silent as it was, Appeared unfit for the repose of night, Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
Of Orleans eagerly I turned: as yet
The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
That greeted me on entering, I could hear

Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng, Bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes Of: Maximilian Robespierre"; the hand, Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech, The same that had been recently pronounced, When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark Some words of indirect reproof had been Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared The man who had an ill surmise of him To bring his charge in openness; whereat, When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred, In silence of all present, from his seat Louvet walked single through the avenue, And took his station in the Tribune, saying, "I, Robespierre, accuse thee!" Well is known The inglorious issue of that charge, and how He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt, The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded, Was left without a follower to discharge His perilous duty, and retire lamenting That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men Who to themselves are false.

But these are things

Of which I speak, only as they were storm Or sunshine to my individual mind, No further. Let me then relate that now—

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In some sort seeing with my proper eyes That Liberty, and Life, and Death, would soon To the remotest corners of the land Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled The capital City; what was struggled for, And by what combatants victory must be won: The indecision on their part whose aim Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those Who in attack or in defence were strong Through their impiety — my inmost soul Was agitated: vea, I could almost Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men, By patient exercise of reason made Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light, The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive From the four quarters of the winds to do For France, what without help she could not do, A work of honour: think not that to this I added, work of safety: from all doubt Or trepidation for the end of things Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
Of opposition and of remedies:
An insignificant stranger and obscure,

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And one, moreover, little graced with power Of eloquence even in my native speech, And all unfit for tumult or intrigue, Yet would I at this time with willing heart Have undertaken for a cause so great Service however dangerous. I revolved, How much the destiny of Man had still Hung upon single persons; that there was, Transcendent to all local patrimony, One nature, as there is one sun in heaven; That objects, even as they are great, thereby Do come within the reach of humblest eyes: That Man is only weak through his mistrust And want of hope where evidence divine Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure: Nor did the inexperience of my youth Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong In hope, and trained to noble aspirations, A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself, Is for Society's unreasoning herd A domineering instinct, serves at once For way and guide, a fluent receptacle That gathers up each petty straggling rill And vein of water, glad to be rolled on In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,

In circumspection and simplicity. Falls rarely in entire discomfiture Below its aim, or meets with, from without, A treachery that foils it or defeats: And, lastly, if the means on human will, Frail human will, dependent should betrav Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt That 'mid the loud distractions of the world A sovereign voice subsists within the soul. Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong, Of life and death, in majesty severe Enjoining, as may best promote the aims Of truth and justice, either sacrifice, From whatsoever region of our cares Or our infirm affections Nature pleads, Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
That are the commonplaces of the schools —
(A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,)
Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
In all their comprehensive bearings known
And visible to philosophers of old,
Men who, to business of the world untrained,
Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
And his compeer Aristogiton, known

To Brutus — that tyrannic power is weak, Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love, Nor the support of good or evil men To trust in; that the godhead which is ours Can never utterly be charmed or stilled; That nothing hath a natural right to last But equity and reason; that all else Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time
But that the virtue of one paramount mind
Would have abashed those impious crests — have
quelled

Outrage and bloody power, and — in despite
Of what the People long had been and were
Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof
Of immaturity, and — in the teeth
Of desperate opposition from without —
Have cleared a passage for just government,
And left a solid birthright to the State,
Redeemed, according to example given
By ancient lawgivers.

In this frame of mind, Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,

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So seemed it, — now I thankfully acknowledge,
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven, —
To England I returned, else (though assured
That I both was and must be of small weight,
No better than a landsman on the deck
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)
Doubtless, I should have then made common cause
With some who perished; haply perished too,
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering, —
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,
A Poet only to myself, to men
Useless, and even, beloved Friend! a soul
To thee unknown!

Twice had the trees let fall
Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
Had caught the accents of my native speech
Upon our native country's sacred ground.
A patriot of the world, how could I glide
Into communion with her sylvan shades,
Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
To abide in the great City, where I found
The general air still busy with the stir
Of that first memorable onset made

By a strong levy of humanity Upon the traffickers in Negro blood; Effort which, though defeated, had recalled To notice old forgotten principles, And through the nation spread a novel heat Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own That this particular strife had wanted power To rivet my affections; nor did now Its unsuccessful issue much excite My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith That, if France prospered, good men would not long Pay fruitless worship to humanity, And this most rotten branch of human shame. Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains, Would fall together with its parent tree. What, then, were my emotions, when in arms Britain put forth her free-born strength in league. Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers! Not in my single self alone I found, But in the minds of all ingenuous youth, Change and subversion from that hour. No shock Given to my moral nature had I known Down to that very moment; neither lapse Nor turn of sentiment that might be named A revolution, save at this one time: All else was progress on the self-same path

On which, with a diversity of pace, I had been travelling: this a stride at once Into another region. As a light And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze On some grey rock — its birth-place — so had I Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower Of my beloved country, wishing not A happier fortune than to wither there: Now was I from that pleasant station torn And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced, Yea, afterwards — truth most painful to record! — Exulted, in the triumph of my soul, When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown, Left without glory on the field, or driven, Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief. — Grief call it not, 't was anything but that, -A conflict of sensations without name. Of which he only, who may love the sight Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge, When, in the congregation bending all To their great Father, prayers were offered up, Or praises for our country's victories; And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance I only, like an uninvited guest Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add, Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear By violence, at one decisive rent,
From the best youth in England their dear pride,
Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time
In which worst losses easily might wean
The best of names, when patriotic love
Did of itself in modesty give way,
Like the Precursor when the Deity
Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time
In which apostasy from ancient faith
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;
Withal a season dangerous and wild,
A time when sage Experience would have snatched
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
In that unworthy service was prepared
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
In that delightful island which protects
Their place of convocation — there I heard,
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
A monitory sound that never failed, —

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The sunset cannon. While the orb went down In the tranquillity of nature, came
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
Without a spirit overcast by dark
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends, Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now; And thus, on every side beset with foes, The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few Spread into madness of the many: blasts From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven. The sternness of the just, the faith of those Who doubted not that Providence had times Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned The human Understanding paramount And made of that their God, the hopes of men Who were content to barter short-lived pangs For a paradise of ages, the blind rage Of insolent tempers, the light vanity Of intermeddlers, steady purposes Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet, And all the accidents of life — were pressed

Into one service, busy with one work.

The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
Her frenzy only active to extol

Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook, The maiden from the bosom of her love, The mother from the cradle of her babe, The warrior from the field — all perished, all — Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks, Head after head, and never heads enough For those that bade them fall. They found their joy, They made it proudly, eager as a child, (If like desires of innocent little ones May with such heinous appetites be compared), Pleased in some open field to exercise A toy that mimics with revolving wings The motion of a wind-mill; though the air Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes Spin in his eyesight, that contents him not, But with the plaything at arm's length, he sets His front against the blast, and runs amain, That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth

Of those enormities, even thinking minds Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being, Forgot that such a sound was ever heard As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath Her innocent authority was wrought, Nor could have been, without her blessed name. The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour Of her composure, felt that agony, And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend! It was a lamentable time for man. Whether a hope had e'er been his or not: A woful time for them whose hopes survived The shock: most woful for those few who still Were flattered, and had trust in human kind: They had the deepest feeling of the grief. Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved: The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms And throttled with an infant godhead's might The snakes about her cradle; that was well, And as it should be; yet no cure for them Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be Hereafter brought in charge against mankind. Most melancholy at that time, O Friend! Were my day-thoughts, - my nights were miserable; Through months, through years, long after the last beat

Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep To me came rarely charged with natural gifts. Such ghastly visions had I of despair And tyranny, and implements of death; And innocent victims sinking under fear, And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer, Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth And levity in dungeons, where the dust Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me In long orations, which I strove to plead Before unjust tribunals, — with a voice Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense, Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt In the last place of refuge — my own soul.

When I began in youth's delightful prime
To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
And holy passion overcame me first,
Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free
From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme!
Without Whose call this world would cease to
breathe,

Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill The veins that branch through every frame of life,

Making man what he is, creature divine,
In single or in social eminence,
Above the rest raised infinite ascents
When reason that enables him to be
Is not sequestered — what a change is here!
How different ritual for this after-worship,
What countenance to promote this second love!
The first was service paid to things which lie
Guarded within the bosom of thy will.
Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest
dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
With them to take a troubled human heart,
Wanted not consolations, nor a creed
Of reconcilement, then when they denounced,
On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
Of their offences, punishment to come;
Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
Before them, in some desolated place,
The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;
So, with devout humility be it said,

So did a portion of that spirit fall On me uplifted from the vantage-ground Of pity and sorrow to a state of being That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw Glimpses of retribution, terrible, And in the order of sublime behests: But, even if that were not, amid the awe Of unintelligible chastisement, Not only acquiescences of faith Survived, but daring sympathies with power, Motions not treacherous or profane, else why Within the folds of no ungentle breast Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? Wild blasts of music thus could find their way Into the midst of turbulent events: So that worst tempests might be listened to. Then was the truth received into my heart, That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring, If from the affliction somewhere do not grow Honour which could not else have been, a faith, An elevation, and a sanctity, If new strength be not given nor old restored, The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt Was taken up by scoffers in their pride, Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap From popular government and equality,"

I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their names
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea Small islands scattered amid stormy waves. So that disastrous period did not want Bright sprinklings of all human excellence. To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less, For those examples, in no age surpassed, Of fortitude and energy and love, And human nature faithful to herself Under worst trials, was I driven to think Of the glad times when first I traversed France A vouthful pilgrim; above all reviewed That eventide, when under windows bright With happy faces and with garlands hung, And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street.

Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed, I paced, a dear companion at my side,

The town of Arras, whence with promise high Issued, on delegation to sustain
Humanity and right, that Robespierre,
He who thereafter, and in how short time!
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
When the calamity spread far and wide —
And this same city, that did then appear
To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost
Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
For lingering yet an image in my mind
To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves A separate record. Over the smooth sands Of Leven's ample estuary lay My journey, and beneath a genial sun, With distant prospect among gleams of sky And clouds and intermingling mountain tops, In one inseparable glory clad, Creatures of one ethereal substance met In consistory, like a diadem Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit

In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales Among whose happy fields I had grown up From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle. That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw Sad opposites out of the inner heart, As even their pensive influence drew from mine. How could it otherwise? for not in vain That very morning had I turned aside To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves, An honoured teacher of my youth was laid, And on the stone were graven by his desire Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray. This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed, Added no farewell to his parting counsel. But said to me, "My head will soon lie low"; And when I saw the turf that covered him. After the lapse of full eight years, those words, With sound of voice and countenance of the Man. Came back upon me, so that some few tears Fell from me in my own despite. But now I thought, still traversing that widespread plain, With tender pleasure of the verses graven Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself: He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,

Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small And rocky island near, a fragment stood, (Itself like a sea rock) the low remains (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds) Of a dilapidated structure, once A Romish chapel, where the vested priest Said matins at the hour that suited those Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide. Not far from that still ruin all the plain Lay spotted with a variegated crowd Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot, Wading beneath the conduct of their guide In loose procession through the shallow stream Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused, Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright And cheerful, but the foremost of the band As he approached, no salutation given In the familiar language of the day, Cried, "Robespierre is dead!" nor was a doubt,

After strict question, left within my mind That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude To everlasting Justice, by this fiat Made manifest. "Come now, ye golden times," Said I forth-pouring on those open sands A hymn of triumph: "as the morning comes From out the bosom of the night, come ye: Thus far our trust is verified; behold! They who with clumsy desperation brought A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might Of their own helper have been swept away; Their madness stands declared and visible: Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth March firmly towards righteousness and peace." — Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how The madding factions might be tranquillised, And how through hardships manifold and long The glorious renovation would proceed. Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts Of exultation, I pursued my way Along that very shore which I had skimmed In former days, when — spurring from the Vale Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,

And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band
Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home
Along the margin of the moonlight sea —
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

FRANCE

BOOK ELEVENTH

FRANCE (concluded)

From that time forth, Authority in France Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased, Yet everything was wanting that might give Courage to them who looked for good by light Of rational Experience, for the shoots And hopeful blossoms of a second spring: Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired; The Senate's language, and the public acts And measures of the Government, though both Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power To daunt me; in the People was my trust: And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen, I knew that wound external could not take Life from the young Republic; that new foes Would only follow, in the path of shame, Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end Great, universal, irresistible. This intuition led me to confound One victory with another, higher far, -Triumphs of unambitious peace at home, And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought That what was in degree the same was likewise

The same in quality, — that, as the worse Of the two spirits then at strife remained Untired, the better, surely, would preserve The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains In all conditions of society, Communion more direct and intimate With Nature, — hence, ofttimes, with reason too — Than age or manhood, even. To Nature then, Power had reverted: habit, custom, law, Had left an interregnum's open space For her to move about in, uncontrolled. Hence could I see how Babel-like their task, Who, by the recent deluge stupified, With their whole souls went culling from the day Its petty promises, to build a tower For their own safety; laughed with my compeers At gravest heads, by enmity to France Distempered, till they found, in every blast Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn, For her great cause record or prophecy Of utter ruin. How might we believe That wisdom could, in any shape, come near Men clinging to delusions so insane? And thus, experience proving that no few Of our opinions had been just, we took Like credit to ourselves where less was due.

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And thought that other notions were as sound, Yea, could not but be right, because we saw That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way, And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme, What in those days, through Britain, was performed To turn all judgments out of their right course; But this is passion over-near ourselves, Reality too close and too intense, And intermixed with something, in my mind, Of scorn and condemnation personal, That would profane the sanctity of verse. Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law A tool of murder; they who ruled the State — Though with such awful proof before their eyes That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse.

And can reap nothing better — child-like longed To imitate, not wise enough to avoid;
Or left (by mere timidity betrayed)
The plain straight road, for one no better chosen Than if their wish had been to undermine
Justice, and make an end of Liberty.

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But from these bitter truths I must return To my own history. It hath been told That I was led to take an eager part In arguments of civil polity, Abruptly, and indeed before my time: I had approached, like other youths, the shield Of human nature from the golden side, And would have fought, even to the death, to attest The quality of the metal which I saw. What there is best in individual man, Of wise in passion, and sublime in power, Benevolent in small societies. And great in large ones, I had oft revolved, Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood By reason: nay, far from it; they were yet, As cause was given me afterwards to learn, Not proof against the injuries of the day; Lodged only at the sanctuary's door, Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared, And with such general insight into evil, And of the bounds which sever it from good, As books and common intercourse with life Must needs have given — to the inexperienced mind, When the world travels in a beaten road, Guide faithful as is needed — I began To meditate with ardour on the rule

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And management of nations; what it is
And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
Their happiness or misery, depends
Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.

¹³ O pleasant exercise of hope and joy! For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood Upon our side, us who were strong in love! Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive. But to be young was very Heaven! O times, In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways Of custom, law, and statute, took at once The attraction of a country in romance! When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights, When most intent on making of herself A prime enchantress — to assist the work, Which then was going forward in her name! Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth, The beauty wore of promise — that which sets (As at some moments might not be unfelt Among the bowers of Paradise itself) The budding rose above the rose full blown. What temper at the prospect did not wake To happiness unthought of? The inert Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!

They who had fed their childhood upon dreams. The play-fellows of fancy, who had made All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength Their ministers, — who in lordly wise had stirred Among the grandest objects of the sense, And dealt with whatsoever they found there As if they had within some lurking right To wield it: — they, too, who of gentle mood Had watched all gentle motions, and to these Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild, And in the region of their peaceful selves; — Nor was it that both found, the meek and lofty Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire, And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish, — Were called upon to exercise their skill, Not in Utopia, — subterranean fields, — Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where! But in the very world, which is the world Of all of us, — the place where, in the end, We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that Earth was then To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen, Seems, when the first time visited, to one Who thither comes to find in it his home? He walks about and looks upon the spot

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With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds, And is half-pleased with things that are amiss, 'T will be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked From every object pleasant circumstance To suit my ends; I moved among mankind With genial feelings still predominant; When erring, erring on the better part, And in the kinder spirit; placable, Indulgent, as not uninformed that men See as they have been taught — Antiquity Gives rights to error; and aware, no less That throwing off oppression must be work As well of License as of Liberty: And above all — for this was more than all — Not caring if the wind did now and then Blow keen upon an eminence that gave Prospect so large into futurity; In brief, a child of Nature, as at first, Diffusing only those affections wider That from the cradle had grown up with me. And losing, in no other way than light Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said Was my condition, till with open war

Britain opposed the liberties of France. This threw me first out of the pale of love; Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source, My sentiments; was not, as hitherto, A swallowing up of lesser things in great, But change of them into their contraries; And thus a way was opened for mistakes And false conclusions, in degree as gross, In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride, Was now a shame; my likings and my loves Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry; And hence a blow that, in maturer age, Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep Into sensations near the heart: meantime. As from the first, wild theories were affoat, To whose pretensions, sedulously urged, I had but lent a careless ear, assured That time was ready to set all things right, And that the multitude, so long oppressed, Would be oppressed no more.

But when events
Brought less encouragement, and unto these
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,
Less occupied the mind, and sentiments

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Could through my understanding's natural growth No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid Her hand upon her object — evidence Safer, of universal application, such As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

But now, become oppressors in their turn, Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence For one of conquest, losing sight of all Which they had struggled for: up mounted now, Openly in the eye of earth and heaven, The scale of liberty. I read her doom. With anger vexed, with disappointment sore, But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame Of a false prophet. While resentment rose, Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds Of mortified presumption, I adhered More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat Of contest, did opinions every day Grow into consequence, till round my mind They clung, as if they were its life, nay more, The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast To depravation, speculative schemes —

That promised to abstract the hopes of Man Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth For ever in a purer element — Found ready welcome. Tempting region that For Zeal to enter and refresh herself, Where passions had the privilege to work, And never hear the sound of their own names. But, speaking more in charity, the dream Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least With that which makes our Reason's naked self The object of its fervour. What delight! How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule, To look through all the frailties of the world, And, with a resolute mastery shaking off Infirmities of nature, time, and place, Build social upon personal Liberty, Which, to the blind restraints of general laws. Superior, magisterially adopts One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed Upon an independent intellect. Thus expectation rose again; thus hope, From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more. Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind, I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst Of a secure intelligence, and sick Of other longing, I pursued what seemed

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A more exalted nature; wished that Man Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state, And spread abroad the wings of Liberty, Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight — A noble aspiration! yet I feel (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts) The aspiration, nor shall ever cease To feel it; — but return we to our course.

Enough, 't is true - could such a plea excuse Those aberrations — had the clamorous friends Of ancient Institutions said and done To bring disgrace upon their very names; Disgrace, of which, custom and written law, And sundry moral sentiments as props Or emanations of those institutes. Too justly bore a part. A veil had been Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth, 'T was even so; and sorrow for the man Who either had not eyes wherewith to see, Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock Was given to old opinions; all men's minds Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose, Let loose and goaded. After what hath been Already said of patriotic love, Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern

In temperament, withal a happy man, And therefore bold to look on painful things, Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold. I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent To anatomise the frame of social life; Yea, the whole body of society Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth. And the errors into which I fell, betraved By present objects, and by reasonings false From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn Out of a heart that had been turned aside From Nature's way by outward accidents, And which was thus confounded, more and more Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared, Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds, Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind, Suspiciously, to establish in plain day Her titles and her honours: now believing. Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground Of obligation, what the rule and whence The sanction; till, demanding formal proof,

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And seeking it in every thing, I lost All feeling of conviction, and, in fine, Sick, wearied out with contrarieties, Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessèd reason of least use
Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,
"What are they but a mockery of a Being
Who hath in no concerns of his a test
Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
Be little profited, would see, and ask
Where is the obligation to enforce?
And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down In reconcilement with an utter waste Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,

(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life, Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward) But turned to abstract science, and there sought Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned Where the disturbances of space and time — Whether in matters various, properties Inherent, or from human will and power Derived — find no admission. Then it was — Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good! — That the beloved Sister in whose sight Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice Of sudden admonition — like a brook That did but cross a lonely road, and now Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn, Companion never lost through many a league — Maintained for me a saving intercourse With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed Than as a clouded and a waning moon: She whispered still that brightness would return; She, in the midst of all, preserved me still A Poet, made me seek beneath that name. And that alone, my office upon earth; And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown, If willing audience fail not, Nature's self, By all varieties of human love

FRANCE

Assisted, led me back through opening day

To those sweet counsels between head and heart

Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with
peace,

Which, through the later sinkings of this cause, Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now In the catastrophe (for so they dream, And nothing less), when, finally to close And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor — This last opprobrium, when we see a people, That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven For manna, take a lesson from the dog Returning to his vomit; when the sun That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved In exultation with a living pomp Of clouds — his glory's natural retinue — Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed, And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine, Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend!

Through times of honour and through times of shame Descending, have I faithfully retraced
The perturbations of a youthful mind
Under a long-lived storm of great events —
A story destined for thy ear, who now,

Among the fallen of nations, dost abide
Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts
His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,
The city of Timoleon! Righteous Heaven!
How are the mighty prostrated! They first,
They first of all that breathe should have awaked
When the great voice was heard from out the
tombs

Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
For ill-requited France, by many deemed
A triffer only in her proudest day;
Have been distressed to think of what she once
Promised, now is; a far more sober cause
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land,
To the reanimating influence lost
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not, And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is One great society alone on earth: The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
To health and joy and pure contentedness;

FRANCE

To me the grief confined, that thou art gone From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now Stands single in her only sanctuary; A lonely wanderer, art gone, by pain Compelled and sickness, at this latter day, This sorrowful reverse for all mankind. I feel for thee, must utter what I feel: The sympathies erewhile in part discharged, Gather afresh, and will have vent again: My own delights do scarcely seem to me My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves, Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks Abroad on many nations, are no more For me that image of pure gladsomeness Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes.

For purpose, at a time, how different!
Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine,
From the first play-time of the infant world
Kept sacred to restorative delight,
When from afar invoked by anxious love?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared, Ere vet familiar with the classic page, I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo, The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened At thy command, at her command gives way: A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores, Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales; Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name Of note belonging to that honoured isle, Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles, Or Archimedes, pure abstracted soul! That doth not yield a solace to my grief: And, O Theocritus, 14 so far have some Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth. By their endowments, good or great, that they Have had, as thou reportest, miracles Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved, When thinking on my own beloved friend, I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed Divine Comates, by his impious lord Within a chest imprisoned; how they came Laden from blooming grove or flowery field, And fed him there, alive, month after month, Because the goatherd, blessèd man! had lips Wet with the Muses' nectar.

FRANCE

Thus I soothe

The pensive moments by this calm fire-side, And find a thousand bounteous images To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine. Our prayers have been accepted; thou wilt stand On Etna's summit, above earth and sea, Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs, Worthy of poets who attuned their harps In wood or echoing cave, for discipline Of heroes; or, in reverence to the gods, 'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain Those temples, where they in their ruins yet Survive for inspiration, shall attract Thy solitary steps: and on the brink Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse; Or, if that fountain be in truth no more, Then, near some other spring - which, by the name

Thou gratulatest, willingly deceived — I see thee linger a glad votary,
And not a captive pining for his home.

BOOK TWELFTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty
race

How without injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth

In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore, Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm; And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is To interpose the covert of your shades, Even as a sleep, between the heart of man And outward troubles, between man himself, Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart: Oh! that I had a music and a voice Harmonious as your own, that I might tell What ye have done for me. The morning shines, Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns, — I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice, In common with the children of her love. Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields, Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven On wings that navigate cerulean skies. So neither were complacency, nor peace, Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good Through these distracted times; in Nature still Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her, Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height, Maintained for me a secret happiness.

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told Of intellectual power, fostering love, Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,

Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing Prophetic sympathies of genial faith: So was I favoured — such my happy lot — Until that natural graciousness of mind Gave way to overpressure from the times And their disastrous issues. What availed, When spells forbade the voyager to land, That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower Of blissful gratitude and fearless love? Dare I avow that wish was mine to see. And hope that future times would surely see, The man to come, parted, as by a gulph, From him who had been; that I could no more Trust the elevation which had made me one With the great family that still survives To illuminate the abyss of ages past, Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed That their best virtues were not free from taint Of something false and weak, that could not stand The open eye of Reason. Then I said, "Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee More perfectly of purer creatures; — yet If reason be nobility in man, Can aught be more ignoble than the man Whom they delight in, blinded as he is

By prejudice, the miserable slave
Of low ambition or distempered love?"

In such strange passion, if I may once more
Review the past, I warred against myself —
A bigot to a new idolatry —
Like a cowled monk who hath forsworn the world,
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;
And as, by simple waving of a wand,
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Those mysteries of being which have made,
And shall continue evermore to make,
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far
Perverted, even the visible Universe
Fell under the dominion of a taste
Less spiritual, with microscopic view
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!

That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,

Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds

And roaring waters, and in lights and shades That marched and countermarched about the hills In glorious apparition, Powers on whom I daily waited, now all eye and now All ear; but never long without the heart Employed, and man's unfolding intellect: O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine Sustained and governed, still dost overflow With an impassioned life, what feeble ones Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke Of human suffering, such as justifies Remissness and inaptitude of mind, But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased Unworthily, disliking here, and there Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred To things above all art; but more, — for this, Although a strong infection of the age, Was never much my habit — giving way To a comparison of scene with scene, Bent overmuch on superficial things, Pampering myself with meagre novelties Of colour and proportion; to the moods Of time and season, to the moral power, The affections and the spirit of the place, Insensible. Nor only did the love

Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt My deeper feelings, but another cause, More subtle and less easily explained. That almost seems inherent in the creature, A twofold frame of body and of mind. I speak in recollection of a time When the bodily eye, in every stage of life The most despotic of our senses, gained Such strength in me as often held my mind In absolute dominion. Gladly here, Entering upon abstruser argument, Could I endeavour to unfold the means Which Nature studiously employs to thwart This tyranny, summons all the senses each To counteract the other, and themselves, And makes them all, and the objects with which all Are conversant, subservient in their turn To the great ends of Liberty and Power. But leave we this: enough that my delights (Such as they were) were sought insatiably. Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound; I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock. Still craving combinations of new forms, New pleasure, wider empire for the sight, Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced To lay the inner faculties asleep.

Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no
more;

Whate'er the scene presented to her view
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life,
And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved;
methought

Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights

In such a being; for, her common thoughts Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth From the retirement of my native hills, I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved, But most intensely; never dreamt of aught More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed Than those few nooks to which my happy feet Were limited. I had not at that time Lived long enough, nor in the least survived The first diviner influence of this world, As it appears to unaccustomed eyes. Worshipping them among the depth of things, As piety ordained, could I submit To measured admiration, or to aught That should preclude humility and love? I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge, Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift Of all this glory filled and satisfied. And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps Roaming, I carried with me the same heart: In truth, the degradation — howsoe'er Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree, Of custom that prepares a partial scale In which the little oft outweighs the great;

Or any other cause that hath been named;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might
make

The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible — was transient; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a creative soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence — depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse — our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give

Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how, The mind is lord and master - outward sense The obedient servant of her will. Such moments Are scattered everywhere, taking their date From our first childhood. I remember well. That once, while yet my inexperienced hand Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills: An ancient servant of my father's house Was with me, my encourager and guide: We had not travelled long, ere some mischance Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length Came to a bottom, where in former times A murderer had been hung in iron chains. The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones And iron case were gone; but on the turf, Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought, Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.

The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past; but still, from year to year
By superstition of the neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
The characters are fresh and visible:

A casual glance had shown them, and I fled, Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road: Then, reascending the bare common, saw A naked pool that lay beneath the hills, The beacon on the summit, and, more near, A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head, And seemed with difficult steps to force her way Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth, An ordinary sight; but I should need Colours and words that are unknown to man, To paint the visionary dreariness Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide, Invested moorland waste and naked pool, The beacon crowning the lone eminence, The female and her garments vexed and tossed By the strong wind. When, in the blessèd hours Of early love, the loved one at my side, I roamed, in daily presence of this scene, Upon the naked pool and dreary crags, And on the melancholy beacon, fell A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam; And think ye not with radiance more sublime For these remembrances, and for the power They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid Of feeling, and diversity of strength Attends us, if but once we have been strong.

Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see In simple childhood something of the base On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel, That from thyself it comes, that thou must give, Else never canst receive. The days gone by Return upon me almost from the dawn Of life: the hiding-places of man's power Open; I would approach them, but they close. I see by glimpses now; when age comes on, May scarcely see at all; and I would give, While yet we may, as far as words can give, Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining, Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past For future restoration. — Yet another Of these memorials: -

One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home,
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,

Scout-like, and gained the summit; 't was a day Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall; Upon my right hand couched a single sheep, Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood; With those companions at my side, I watched, Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist Gave intermitting prospect of the copse And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned, — That dreary time, — ere we had been ten days Sojourners in my father's house, he died; And I and my three brothers, orphans then, Followed his body to the grave. The event, With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared A chastisement; and when I called to mind That day so lately past, when from the crag I looked in such anxiety of hope; With trite reflections of morality, Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low To God, Who thus corrected my desires; And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain, And all the business of the elements. The single sheep, and the one blasted tree, And the bleak music from that old stone wall, The noise of wood and water, and the mist That on the line of each of those two roads

Advanced in such indisputable shapes;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

BOOK THIRTEENTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED (Concluded)

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree; 't is mine
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude, and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To re-appear, 't was proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape

And image of right reason; that matures Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth To no impatient or fallacious hopes, No heat of passion or excessive zeal, No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns Of self-applauding intellect; but trains To meekness, and exalts by humble faith; Holds up before the mind intoxicate With present objects, and the busy dance Of things that pass away, a temperate show Of objects that endure; and by this course Disposes her, when over-fondly set On throwing off incumbrances, to seek In man, and in the frame of social life, Whate'er there is desirable and good Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form And function, or, through strict vicissitude Of life and death, revolving. Above all Were re-established now those watchful thoughts Which, seeing little worthy or sublime In what the Historian's pen so much delights To blazon — power and energy detached From moral purpose — early tutored me To look with feelings of fraternal love Upon the unassuming things that hold A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found Once more in Man an object of delight, Of pure imagination, and of love; And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged, Again I took the intellectual eye For my instructor, studious more to see Great truths, than touch and handle little ones. Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust Became more firm in feelings that had stood The test of such a trial: clearer far My sense of excellence — of right and wrong: The promise of the present time retired Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes, Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought For present good in life's familiar face, And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last And what would disappear; prepared to find Presumption, folly, madness, in the men Who thrust themselves upon the passive world As Rulers of the world; to see in these, Even when the public welfare is their aim, Plans without thought, or built on theories Vague and unsound; and having brought the books Of modern statists to their proper test,

Life, human life, with all its sacred claims Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights, Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death: And having thus discerned how dire a thing Is worshipped in that idol proudly named "The Wealth of Nations," where alone that wealth Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained A more judicious knowledge of the worth And dignity of individual man, No composition of the brain, but man Of whom we read, the man whom we behold With our own eyes — I could not but enquire — Not with less interest than heretofore, But greater, though in spirit more subdued — Why is this glorious creature to be found One only in ten thousand? What one is, Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown By Nature in the way of such a hope? Our animal appetites and daily wants, Are these obstructions insurmountable? If not, then others vanish into air. "Inspect the basis of the social pile: Enquire," said I, "how much of mental power And genuine virtue they possess who live By bodily toil, labour exceeding far Their due proportion, under all the weight

Of that injustice which upon ourselves Ourselves entail." Such estimate to frame I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?) Among the natural abodes of men, Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind My earliest notices; with these compared The observations made in later youth, And to that day continued. — For, the time Had never been when throes of mighty Nations And the world's tumult unto me could yield, How far soe'er transported and possessed, Full measure of content; but still I craved An intermingling of distinct regards And truths of individual sympathy Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned From the great City, else it must have proved To me a heart-depressing wilderness; But much was wanting: therefore did I turn To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads; Sought you enriched with everything I prized, With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed, Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,

While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook, Deep vale, or anywhere, the home of both, From which it would be misery to stir: Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth, In my esteem, next to such dear delight, Was that of wandering on from day to day Where I could meditate in peace, and cull Knowledge that step by step might lead me on To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird Wafted upon the wind from distant lands. Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves. Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn: And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please, Converse with men, where if we meet a face We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths With long long ways before, by cottage bench, Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way? the sight,
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
On my imagination since the morn
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far-off hill

Beyond the limits that my feet had trod. Was like an invitation into space Boundless, or guide into eternity. Yes, something of the grandeur which invests The mariner, who sails the roaring sea Through storm and darkness, early in my mind Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth; Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more. Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites; From many other uncouth vagrants (passed In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why Take note of this? When I began to enquire. To watch and question those I met, and speak Without reserve to them, the lonely roads Were open schools in which I daily read With most delight the passions of mankind, Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed; There saw into the depth of human souls, Souls that appear to have no depth at all To careless eyes. And — now convinced at heart How little those formalities, to which With overweening trust alone we give The name of Education, have to do With real feeling and just sense; how vain A correspondence with the talking world Proves to the most; and called to make good search

If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon —
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affection, love Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed A gift, to use a term which they would use, Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires Retirement, leisure, language purified By manners studied and elaborate; That whoso feels such passion in its strength Must live within the very light and air Of courteous usages refined by art.

True is it, where oppression worse than death Salutes the being at his birth, where grace Of culture hath been utterly unknown, And poverty and labour in excess

From day to day pre-occupy the ground

Of the affections, and to Nature's self Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed, Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease Among the close and overcrowded haunts Of cities, where the human heart is sick. And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed. — Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel How we mislead each other; above all, How books mislead us, seeking their reward From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see By artificial lights; how they debase The Many for the pleasure of those Few; Effeminately level down the truth To certain general notions, for the sake Of being understood at once, or else Through want of better knowledge in the heads That framed them; flattering self-conceit with words, That, while they most ambitiously set forth Extrinsic differences, the outward marks Whereby society has parted man From man, neglect the universal heart.

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence

To Nature, and the power of human minds, To men as they are men within themselves. How oft high service is performed within, When all the external man is rude in show, — Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold, But a mere mountain chapel, that protects Its simple worshippers from sun and shower. Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these, If future years mature me for the task, Will I record the praises, making verse Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth And sanctity of passion, speak of these, That justice may be done, obeisance paid Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach, Inspire: through unadulterated ears Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, — my theme No other than the very heart of man, As found among the best of those who live — Not unexalted by religious faith, Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few -In Nature's presence: thence may I select Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight; And miserable love, that is not pain To hear of, for the glory that redounds Therefrom to human kind, and what we are. Be mine to follow with no timid step

Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride That I have dared to tread this holy ground, Speaking no dream, but things oracular; Matter not lightly to be heard by those Who to the letter of the outward promise Do read the invisible soul; by men adroit In speech, and for communion with the world Accomplished; minds whose faculties are then Most active when they are most eloquent, And elevated most when most admired. Men may be found of other mould than these. Who are their own upholders, to themselves Encouragement, and energy, and will, Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words As native passion dictates. Others, too, There are among the walks of homely life Still higher, men for contemplation framed, Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase; Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse: Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power, The thought, the image, and the silent joy: Words are but under-agents in their souls; When they are grasping with their greatest strength, They do not breathe among them: this I speak In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts

IMAGINATION AND TASTE

For His own service; knoweth, loveth us, When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive Convictions still more strong than heretofore, Not only that the inner frame is good. And graciously composed, but that, no less, Nature for all conditions wants not power To consecrate, if we have eves to see, The outside of her creatures, and to breathe Grandeur upon the very humblest face Of human life. I felt that the array Of act and circumstance, and visible form, Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms Of Nature have a passion in themselves, That intermingles with those works of man To which she summons him; although the works Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own; And that the Genius of the Poet hence May boldly take his way among mankind Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood By Nature's side among the men of old, And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend! If thou partake the animating faith That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each

Connected in a mighty scheme of truth. Have each his own peculiar faculty, Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame The humblest of this band who dares to hope That unto him hath also been youchsafed An insight that in some sort he possesses, A privilege whereby a work of his, Proceeding from a source of untaught things, Creative and enduring, may become A power like one of Nature's. To a hope Not less ambitious once among the wilds Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised: There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads Lengthening in solitude their dreary line, Time with his retinue of ages fled Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear: Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there, A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest, With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold; The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength, Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty. I called on Darkness — but before the word

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Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take All objects from my sight; and lo! again The Desert visible by dismal flames: It is the sacrificial altar, fed With living men — how deep the groans! the voice Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills The monumental hillocks, and the pomp Is for both worlds, the living and the dead. At other moments — (for through that wide waste Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds, That yet survive, a work, as some divine, Shaped by the Druids, so to represent Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth The constellations — gently was I charmed Into a waking dream, a reverie That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned, Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky, Alternately, and plain below, while breath Of music swayed their motions, and the waste Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed Or fancied in the obscurity of years

From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!

Pleased with some unpremeditated strains That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said That then and there my mind had exercised Upon the vulgar forms of present things, The actual world of our familiar days, Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone, An image, and a character, by books Not hitherto reflected. Call we this A partial judgment — and yet why? for then We were as strangers; and I may not speak Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude, Which on thy young imagination, trained In the great City, broke like light from far. Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself Witness and judge; and I remember well That in life's every-day appearances I seemed about this time to gain clear sight Of a new world — a world, too, that was fit To be transmitted, and to other eyes Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws Whence spiritual dignity originates, Which do both give it being and maintain A balance, an ennobling interchange Of action from without and from within; The excellence, pure function, and best power Both of the objects seen, and eye that sees.

BOOK FOURTEENTH

CONCLUSION

In one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise, from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night, Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky; But, undiscouraged, we began to climb The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round, And, after ordinary travellers' talk With our conductor, pensively we sank Each into commerce with his private thoughts: Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself Was nothing either seen or heard that checked Those musings or diverted, save that once The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,

Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent. This small adventure, for even such it seemed In that wild place and at the dead of night, Being over and forgotten, on we wound In silence as before. With forehead bent Earthward, as if in opposition set Against an enemy, I panted up With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts. Thus might we wear a midnight hour away, Ascending at loose distance each from each, And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band; When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten, And with a step or two seemed brighter still; Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause, For instantly a light upon the turf Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up The Moon hung naked in a firmament Of azure without cloud, and at my feet Rested a silent sea of hoary mist. A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved All over this still ocean; and beyond, Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched, In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes, Into the main Atlantic, that appeared To dwindle, and give up his majesty,

Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.

Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift —
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place —
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent night
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In one continuous stream; a mind sustained By recognitions of transcendent power, In sense conducting to ideal form, In soul of more than mortal privilege. One function, above all, of such a mind Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth, 'Mid circumstances awful and sublime. That mutual domination which she loves To exert upon the face of outward things, So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed With interchangeable supremacy, That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive, And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus To bodily sense exhibits, is the express Resemblance of that glorious faculty That higher minds bear with them as their own. This is the very spirit in which they deal With the whole compass of the universe: They from their native selves can send abroad Kindred mutations: for themselves create A like existence: and, whene'er it dawns Created for them, catch it, or are caught By its inevitable mastery, Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.

Them the enduring and the transient both Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things From least suggestions; ever on the watch, Willing to work and to be wrought upon, They need not extraordinary calls To rouse them; in a world of life they live, By sensible impressions not enthralled, But by their quickening impulse made more prompt To hold fit converse with the spiritual world, And with the generations of mankind Spread over time, past, present, and to come, Age after age, till Time shall be no more. Such minds are truly from the Deity, For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss That flesh can know is theirs — the consciousness Of Whom they are, habitually infused Through every image and through every thought, And all affections by communion raised From earth to heaven, from human to divine; Hence endless occupation for the Soul, Whether discursive or intuitive: Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life, Emotions which best foresight need not fear, Most worthy then of trust when most intense. Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush Our hearts — if here the words of Holy Writ

May with fit reverence be applied — that peace Which passeth understanding, that repose In moral judgments which from this pure source Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself? For this alone is genuine liberty: Where is the favoured being who hath held That course unchecked, unerring, and untired, In one perpetual progress smooth and bright? — A humbler destiny have we retraced, And told of lapse and hesitating choice, And backward wanderings along thorny ways: Yet — compassed round by mountain solitudes, Within whose solemn temple I received My earliest visitations, careless then Of what was given me; and which now I range, A meditative, oft a suffering, man — Do I declare — in accents which, from truth Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend Their modulation with these vocal streams — That, whatsoever falls my better mind. Revolving with the accidents of life, May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled, Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,

Tamper with conscience from a private aim: Nor was in any public hope the dupe Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits, But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy From every combination which might aid The tendency, too potent in itself. Of use and custom to bow down the soul Under a growing weight of vulgar sense. And substitute a universe of death For that which moves with light and life informed. Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love, To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends, Be this ascribed; to early intercourse, In presence of sublime or beautiful forms. With the adverse principles of pain and joy — Evil as one is rashly named by men Who know not what they speak. By love subsists All lasting grandeur, by pervading love; That gone, we are as dust. — Behold the fields In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love, And not inaptly so, for love it is, Far as it carries thee. In some green bower

Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed;
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast

The works of man and face of human life; And lastly, from its progress have we drawn Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme, So also hath that intellectual Love, For they are each in each, and cannot stand Dividually. — Here must thou be, O Man! Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here; Here keepest thou in singleness thy state: No other can divide with thee this work: No secondary hand can intervene To fashion this ability; 't is thine, The prime and vital principle is thine In the recesses of thy nature, far From any reach of outward fellowship, Else is not thine at all. But joy to him, Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid Here, the foundation of his future years! For all that friendship, all that love can do, All that a darling countenance can look Or dear voice utter, to complete the man, Perfect him, made imperfect in himself, All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen Up to the height of feeling intellect

Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart Be tender as a nursing mother's heart; Of female softness shall his life be full, Of humble cares and delicate desires, Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents! Sister of my soul! Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere Poured out for all the early tenderness Which I from thee imbibed; and 't is most true That later seasons owed to thee no less: For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch Of kindred hands that opened out the springs Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite Of all that unassisted I had marked In life or nature of those charms minute That win their way into the heart by stealth (Still to the very going-out of youth) I too exclusively esteemed that love, And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings, Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend! My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood In her original self too confident, Retained too long a countenance severe; A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds





Familiar, and a favourite of the stars: But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers, Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze. And teach the little birds to build their nests And warble in its chambers. At a time When Nature, destined to remain so long Foremost in my affections, had fallen back Into a second place, pleased to become A handmaid to a nobler than herself, When every day brought with it some new sense Of exquisite regard for common things, And all the earth was budding with these gifts Of more refined humanity, thy breath, Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring That went before my steps. Thereafter came One whom with thee friendship had early paired; She came, no more a phantom to adorn A moment, but an inmate of the heart, And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined To penetrate the lofty and the low; Even as one essence of pervading light Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp Couched in the dewy grass.

With such a theme, Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
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Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul! Placed on this earth to love and understand, And from thy presence shed the light of love. Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of? Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things In the self-haunting spirit learned to take More rational proportions; mystery, The incumbent mystery of sense and soul, Of life and death, time and eternity, Admitted more habitually a mild Interposition — a serene delight In closelier gathering cares, such as become A human creature, howsoe'er endowed, Poet, or destined for a humbler name; And so the deep enthusiastic joy, The rapture of the hallelujah sent From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed.

And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought To its appointed close: the discipline And consummation of a Poet's mind, In everything that stood most prominent, Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached The time (our guiding object from the first) When we may, not presumptuously, I hope, Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such My knowledge, as to make me capable Of building up a Work that shall endure. Yet much hath been omitted, as need was; Of books how much! and even of the other wealth That is collected among woods and fields, Far more: for Nature's secondary grace Hath hitherto been barely touched upon, The charm more superficial that attends Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice Apt illustrations of the moral world, Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.

Finally, and above all, O Friend! (I speak With due regret) how much is overlooked In human nature and her subtle ways, As studied first in our own hearts, and then In life among the passions of mankind, Varying their composition and their hue,

Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes That individual character presents To an attentive eye. For progress meet, Along this intricate and difficult path, Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained, As one of many schoolfellows compelled, In hardy independence, to stand up Amid conflicting interests, and the shock Of various tempers; to endure and note What was not understood, though known to be: Among the mysteries of love and hate, Honour and shame, looking to right and left, Unchecked by innocence too delicate, And moral notions too intolerant. Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called To take a station among men, the step Was easier, the transition more secure, More profitable also; for, the mind Learns from such timely exercise to keep In wholesome separation the two natures, The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern; — Since I withdrew unwillingly from France, I led an undomestic wanderer's life In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,

Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot Of rural England's cultivated vales Or Cambrian solitudes. A youth — (he bore The name of Calvert — it shall live, if words Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief That by endowments not from me withheld Good might be furthered — in his last decay By a bequest sufficient for my needs Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk At large and unrestrained; nor damped too soon By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet Far less a common follower of the world. He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even A necessary maintenance insures, Without some hazard to the finer sense: He cleared a passage for me, and the stream Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Told what best merits mention, further pains
Our present purpose seems not to require,
And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
The mood in which this labour was begun,
O Friend! The termination of my course
Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then,

Having now

In that distraction and intense desire,

I said unto the life which I had lived,
Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 't is reproach to hear? Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which, like a lark,
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attempered and her deep-drawn sighs,
Yet centring all in love, and in the end
All gratulant, if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,

And, with life, power to accomplish aught of
worth,

That will be deemed no insufficient plea
For having given the story of myself,
Is all uncertain: but, belovèd Friend!
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes

Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable Thorn —
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness,
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard;
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
That were our daily portion when we first
Together wantoned in wild Poesy,
But, under pressure of a private grief,
Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,
That in this meditative history
Have been laid open, needs must make me feel
More deeply, yet enable me to bear
More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon

Restored to us in renovated health; When, after the first mingling of our tears, 'Mong other consolations, we may draw Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame,
By nations, sink together, we shall still
Find solace — knowing what we have learnt to
know,

Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth

On which he dwells, above this frame of things (Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged) In beauty exalted, as it is itself Of quality and fabric more divine.

END OF VOLUME III

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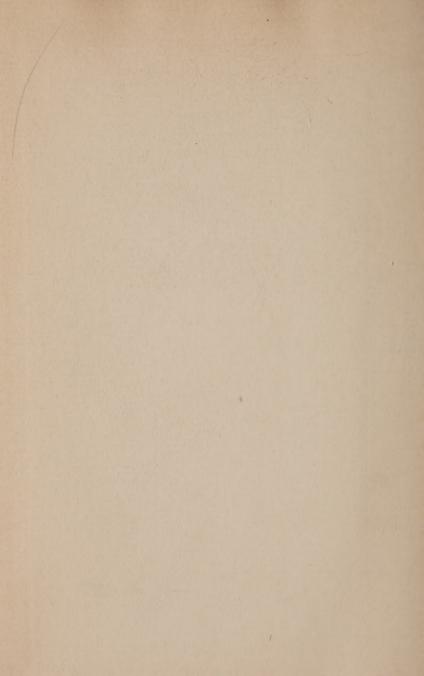
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